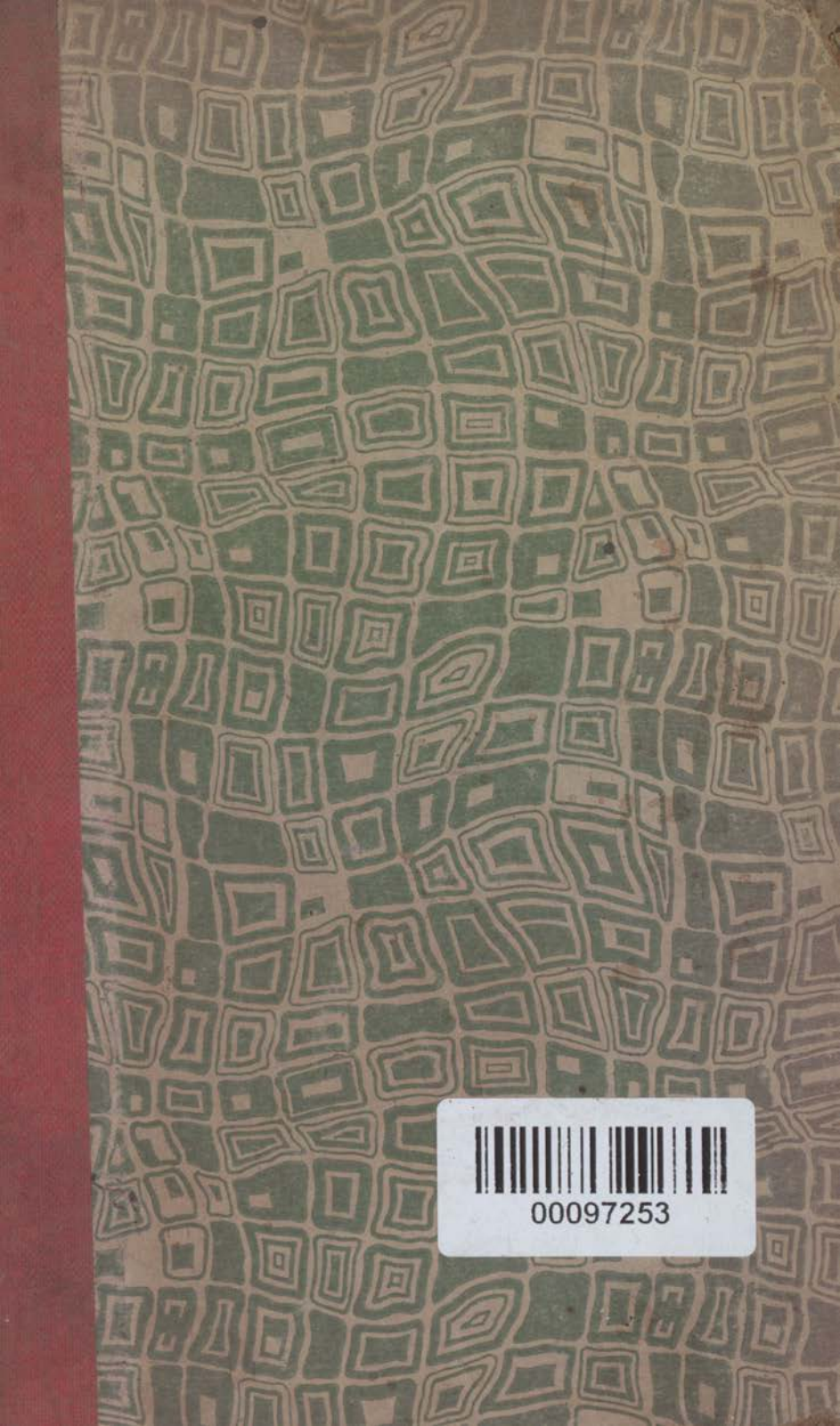
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ON RIGHT AND WRONG

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ON RIGHT AND WRONG

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BY

WILLIAM SAMUEL LILLY

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Τοὺς ἄρα πολλὰ καλὰ θεωμένους, αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ καλὸν μὴ ὁρῶντας, μηδ' ἄλλῳ ἐπ' αὐτο ἄγοντι δυναμένους ἕπεσθαι, καὶ πολλὰ δίκαια, αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ δίκαιον μή, καὶ πάντα οὕτω, δοξάζειν φήσομεν ἅπαντα, γιγνώσκειν δὲ ὧν δοξάζουσιν οὐδέν. Μὴ οὖν τι πλημμελήσομεν φιλόδοξους καλοῦντες αὐτοὺς μᾶλλον ἢ φιλοσόφους, καὶ ἆρα ἡμῖν σφόδρα χαλεπανοῦσιν, ἂν οὕτω λέγωμεν ;

PLATO.

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TO THE REV. MANDELL CREIGHTON,

CANON OF WORCESTER,

Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History
in the University of Cambridge.

MY DEAR CREIGHTON,

In writing your name here, with your kind permission, I desire not merely to offer you a token—poor and inadequate, as I know full well—of personal regard and esteem. I wish also to avail myself of an opportunity to testify my appreciation of, my gratitude for, your fruitful endeavour to raise the character of historical studies in this country. You have done much to take away the reproach, too long and too justly attaching to English scholarship, for the inadequacy of its methods and for the scantiness of its achievements, in this important field of intellectual activity. And it is a deep satisfaction to me that the chief scene of your labours is in my own University, which is so fortunate as to number you among her adopted sons.

But, to say the truth, there is yet another feeling, besides friendship and gratitude, which has led me to offer you this book. Some years ago you did

me the honour of inviting me to contribute to the organ of higher historical criticism, called into existence by you to supply a grievous want in our periodical literature. It would have been a great gratification to me to associate myself, in however small a way, with your work. It is a cause of much regret to me that I have been able to offer you only one paper for the *English Historical Review*, and that of the nature of a mere personal explanation. The present volume must plead as my excuse. Great as are our national shortcomings in the domain of history, they are assuredly far greater in the domain of moral philosophy. "The oracles are dumb:" or if they speak at all, it is "in words deceiving." "O, psychologie, garde-toi de physiologie!" exclaimed Maine de Biran, more than half a century ago. That is precisely what psychology has quite failed to do, either in his country or in ours. It is a most astonishing, a most disheartening sign of the times, that people are supposed to be entitled to speak with authority upon questions of ontology or ethics, merely because they happen to have attained some degree of eminence in some branch of physical science. They may not have read a single metaphysical text-book. Nay, they may be ignorant of the meaning of the commonest philosophical terms. Or—but that is the accomplishment of

a select few—they may possess "just enough of learning to misquote." No matter. They pose as moral philosophers, upon the strength of their achievements in cerebral mensuration or in the dynamics of matter. And their pretensions are allowed, not only by ignorant and foolish "general readers," whose suffrages largely determine public opinion, but even by accredited and authoritative teachers, whose office it is specially to represent the claims, and to guard the rights of moral philosophy. The consequences have been unspeakably disastrous, both in speculation and in practice. I remember the late M. Caro once remarked to me, "La morale de nos jours, c'est une morale de commis-voyageur." This witness is true.

In such a condition of things, it appeared to me a duty to do what little I could to vindicate the true method in ethics. There is only one true method. In the following pages, I have endeavoured to exhibit it, and to point out some of its more important practical applications. It has been well observed by the illustrious Trendelenburg: "Es ist eine alte und immer junge Aufgabe, welche zu keiner Zeit in der Wissenschaft ruhen darf, die Grundlagen, auf welchen Sitte und Recht stehen, von welchen Werth und Unwerth des Lebens abhängen, aus dem Schwanken der Meinungen und Strebungen in eine festere Lage zu bringen."

Such is the task to which I have sought to make my humble contribution in this book. But, unlike Trendelenburg in his *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, I am not writing for readers trained in philosophy. Such a class of readers can hardly be said to exist in England. My object has been to present a practical treatment of a practical subject, to intelligent and thoughtful men of the world. Hence I have sought to say what I had to say as concisely as might be. I have also endeavoured to avoid, as far as possible, technical expressions, and modes of thought not likely to be familiar save to philosophical students. I am well aware that my pages have thereby lost in precision, and, consequently, in value to scholars like yourself. I feel confident, however, that you will pardon that defect, if—which I earnestly hope—my treatment of my subject commends itself to you, as likely to promote a more intelligent appreciation, generally, of topics involving the moral life and death of men and of nations.

But instead of the letter which I proposed to write when I sat down, I am inflicting upon you a dissertation. "Verbum non amplius addam."

I am, my dear Creighton,

Very truly yours,

W. S. LILLY.

Athenæum Club.
March 25th, 1890.

SUMMARY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CRISIS OF ETHICS.

PAGE

The idea of Right has hitherto been venerated by mankind at large, as supersensuous, absolute, divine. Rights have been held to rest upon an ethical sanction, and that upon noumenal truth 1

In the present day the principles upon which the concepts of Right and Wrong have been based, are more than questioned, and the old ethical doctrines are falling into discredit. We are living in a moral crisis . 4

Which must be attributed to the advance of Materialism in the general mind 7

There are many varieties of Materialism: for example the late Professor Clifford, Professor Huxley, and Mr. Herbert Spencer, represent three different types 8

But all agree in restricting our knowledge to the phenomenal universe, of which consciousness and will are for them fortuitous or necessary products: they teach that the laws of thought are, in the last resort, only sensations, or induced tendencies of the nervous system; they express the entire man by matter: his intellectual and moral being as well as his corporal frame 14

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In the long run it will be found that there are only two schools of thought, Transcendentalism and Materialism 15

One of the most striking signs of the times is the extent to which Materialism has triumphed throughout Europe, both in the higher and in popular literature 17

Politics and art tell the same tale 22

We may see the corroding effects of Materialism in all the most important departments of human life . 24

For example, it is fatal to the idea of human responsibility, which is the basis of penal law . . 25

It is fatal to marriage, and to the virtue of chastity, of which marriage is the guardian . . . 28

Certain it is that the old ethical conceptions which have governed civilised life, largely share in the discredit cast by Materialism upon the metaphysical dogmas whereon they rested 36

Materialism, however, proposes to rear for us a new morality upon another foundation. That proposal will be examined in the next chapter . . 36

CHAPTER II.

MATERIALISTIC ETHICS.

The new morality which Materialism offers is to be based upon "the laws of comfort" or "the dicta of [physical] science" 37

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It is a morality deduced merely from physical law, grounded solely on what is called "experience," and on analysis of and deductions from experience; holding only of the positive sciences, and rejecting all pure reason, all philosophy, in the proper sense of the word 38

This new morality is, in short, Hedonism; it conceives of man as an animal for whom pain and pleasure are "the sole and the ultimate causes of action" . 39

It accounts of Right, not as absolute, but as relative: the accord of the individual instinct with the social instinct: and of Wrong, as the absence of such accord. It finds in general utility the only scientific and experimental criterion of human action . . 42

And as it deduces Right from the physical fact of living together, so does it deduce Duty from the physical necessity of living together 45

Virtue it resolves into conduct tending to the general good, and therefore consecrated by public opinion . 46

It repudiates free-will as in manifest contradiction with the law of mechanical causality, and by its identification of moral with physical necessity it is led to Determinism 47

Objections to this new morality:

(1) It is devoid of obligation, in place of which it presents us with a mere motive, resting upon a proposition by no means universally true . 48

(2) In a world of mechanism Right is a meaningless word, for it has neither subject nor object . 51

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(3) Physical laws give us mere facts, the authority of which is their material force, and which are utterly incapable of yielding the ethical *ought* . 51

(4) Public opinion, with its "uniformities of approbation and disapprobation," is in no sense the creative principle of morality: so far as it represents the ethical traditions lying at the root of national character it is a force for good; but an effect, not a cause. 53

(5) The application of the laws of natural history to social relations issues in complete ethical irresponsibility, and makes of morality a mere regulation of police 54

(6) "The agreeable consciousness resulting from the healthy exercise of the energies of our nature" is grotesquely inadequate to support the old rule of right action "Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra" 57

(7) Whether morality be regarded objectively or subjectively, Materialism is fatal to it . . 58

Consequences, although not a criterion of morality, are an element in ratiocination. A *reductio ad absurdum* is a good logical process, because man consists in reason 58

And the fact that the doctrines of Materialism issue in unreason, is enough to discredit them: for the universe is reasonable: it is cosmos not chaos . . 59

No compromise is possible between the two schools of Materialism and Transcendentalism . . . 61

But a wider physic would not hurt our metaphysic . 62

CHAPTER III.

EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS.

PAGE

Mr. Spencer's ethical teaching deserves special attention, as the most noteworthy attempt to establish the rules of right conduct upon a new basis: and therefore this chapter is devoted to the consideration of it 66

He regards "moral phenomena" as phenomena of evolution: and evolution he defines as "constituted by a redistribution of Matter and Motion": his method in morals is therefore purely physical . . 68

Like "the men of science," whose teachings were considered in the last chapter, he reduces all knowledge to experience and all morality to expedience . . 69

That this is so, is often denied, and Mr. Spencer's vigorous criticism of Bentham and Mill is urged in support of the denial 70

It is perfectly true that Mr. Spencer does not confine himself to the experience of the individual, or adopt the bald empiricism which sums up morality as enlightened self-interest. His point of departure is not the individual, but the race: and his "laws of conduct" are evolved not from personal, but from tribal selfishness. But, however complicated the process, to experience and expediency he comes at last 70

It is absolutely clear from his own statements, first, that he dissents utterly from the transcendental school as to the foundation of morals: insisting that

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there can be no eternal principle of right and wrong: which words have for him only a subjective meaning, only a momentary consequence in the evolution of being: his controversy with Bentham is not about the *source* of ethics, but about the *mode* of estimating pain and pleasure: to him laws of conduct are "formulas of utility, not as empirically estimated, but as" what he calls "rationally determined" . . 71

Equally clear is it, in the second place, that he denies free-will in every possible sense and subordinates morality to the laws of life, which laws he accounts of as purely physical, his argument resting mainly upon what is really a sophism about conformity to law 74

And, thirdly, no less evident is it that he identifies moral goodness with pleasure, by a grave metaphysical error, while, by an error not less serious, he abstracts moral obligation in general from a representation of "the natural consequences" of certain acts . . 80

He has no sort of rational answer to give to the question what is the obligation to right conduct: no valid reason to offer why the individual should ever sacrifice himself 88

He tells us that his arguments are valid only for optimists, but experience, to which he appeals, does not yield him optimism: hence he is compelled to invent a Laputa, which he calls the "ideal," wherein he hopes his ethics will be verified: but this is to put himself altogether out of court 90

His evolutionary ethics, are, in fact, a house of cards, built upon a foundation of sand . . . 94

CHAPTER IV.

RATIONAL ETHICS.

PAGE

The true basis of Ethics must be sought in Reason: which is "the power of universal and necessary convictions; the source and substance of truths above sense, and having their evidence in themselves" . 96

Upon its testimony we believe in Natural Right, as immutable truth, wherein every man shares who comes into the world: in Justice, as prior to all experience, and wholly independent of empirical deductions: in the Moral Law, as supreme over the totality of existence 97

Our intuitions of Right and Wrong are first principles anterior to all systems 98

They are self-evident and categorical, and from them ethical science starts. Thus its principles are, in the strictest sense, transcendental. The moral "ought" appeals, not to experience, but to the reason of things 99

Hence, in its own sphere, morality is autonomous: it is absolutely independent, both of religious systems and of the physical sciences 99

The rule of ethics is a natural and permanent revelation of the Reason 100

The most certain portion of all my knowledge is that I—the thinking being—exist 100

But as surely as I am conscious of myself, so am I conscious of ethical obligation. The sense of duty is a primary fact of human nature 101

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This is man's special prerogative. The rudiments of an ethical sense may, indeed, be found in creatures inferior to man in the scale of animate existence. But of man, alone, can we predicate consciousness in the proper signification of the word. He alone can recognise and will the creative thought of his being: he alone is a person 101

Whatever the period in history may have been when man's personality emerged, it was due to the growth, side by side with sensuous and instinctive impulses, of the faculty of Reason, which rendered his liberty possible, by emancipating him from the yoke of instinct as no other animal is emancipated 103

This free volition is man's distinctive endowment; the essence, the form of his personality: for it is the condition of the realisation of his ethical end, in virtue of which he is a Person 104

To personality attach rights and duties, which are different aspects of the same thing. We cannot predicate the one where we cannot predicate the other . 104

Duty is the ethically necessary. Morality consists in deliberate self-submission to that necessity. And this free volition, determined by the idea of good, is in itself a revelation of the moral law . . 104

. . .

The moral law may be said to be the rule of action which arises out of the relation of Reason to itself, as its own end. Necessity is its primary note . . 104

It is a necessity of a unique kind, derived from a law of ideal relation, obligatory on our wills . . 105

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The moral law claims obedience as a thing absolutely good, as an end in itself: and by that very claim, exhibits itself as transcendental . . . 105

Its organon is the Practical Reason, the Moral Understanding, Conscience 106

The sense of Duty, a form of the mind itself, exists as "a blank formula" which may be filled up in a variety of ways. The point upon which conscience never varies is that duty exists 106

Human progress means, before all things, the education of conscience: the deeper apprehension of the moral law: that is of justice, which is "the will to render to every man his right." 108

This "right" arises from the primordial idea of the person in himself; but only in society is personality realised: the social organism exhibits that which lies in the nature of man, but which could never have come out of him in isolation 109

In the ethical fellowship of successive generations, the idea of right is ever increasingly realised: it grows in the human conscience 110

But an *idea*, in the true sense of the word, it is, and universality is one of its essential notes . . . 111

The belief that human law can be the ultimate ground and only measure of right, or that all human rights arise from contract, express or implied, is, upon the face of it, untenable 112

Such rights as the right to existence, or the right to self-defence, possess *universal* validity. They are merely subjective expressions of Right, which is founded on necessity; and may properly be called natural, because they originate in the nature of things . . 112

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The law of nature is an expression of the nature of things in their ethical relations 114

The natural rights of man have an ideal value, as showing the goal towards which society, in unison with individual efforts, should tend 114

All human rights are really but different aspects of the one great aboriginal right of man to belong to himself, to realise the idea of his being 114

All human laws are but formulas, in which we endeavour to apply the dictates of that universal law, which is absolute and eternal Righteousness 114

"God is law say the wise." In Him the ethical order is eternally conceived, eternally realised. But the moral law leads to, is not derived from, the Theistic idea . 115

It supplies the only foundation upon which the social edifice can be surely established. The true conception of the State is that of an Ethical Society . 117

The following are fundamental positions of Rational Ethics. The moral law, an expression of Universal Reason, is a formal law, sovereign over all; a law of ideal relation, obligatory upon all wills. The desire to do right as right—that alone is morality. The idea of "right" or "ethical good" is a simple aboriginal idea, not decomposable into any other, but strictly *sui generis*. It cannot be resolved into the idea of happiness, or of pleasure, or of greatest usefulness; neither does it mean "commanded by the Deity," or "imposed by social needs." It admits of no definition save in terms of itself. It has definite relations to various other ideas, while perfectly independent of them as to its essence. It has therefore,

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nothing to do, *in its own nature*, with Egoism, Altruism, Utilitarianism, or any method of reckoning consequences, save the one moral consequence, good or evil. It is innate, in the sense that every human being has the capacity of requiring it 117

t is of the utmost importance to insist on these truths at the present day 119

In the remaining chapters of this work six practical applications of them will be indicated . . . 121

CHAPTER V.

THE ETHICS OF PUNISHMENT.

The prevalent opinion concerning punishment is that it has two ends: to deter and to reform. . . . 122

But this, although true so far as it goes, is not a sufficient account of punishment, which is, first, and before all things, *vindictive* 124

As a matter of fact, punishment is associated in our minds with wrong-doing And the association is not, as the philosophy of relativity teaches, accidental; it is necessary; the work of reason, not of human caprice 125

The first fact about man is his consciousness of the moral law and of his obligation to obey it. But the very words "law" and "obligation" imply a penal sanction. 125

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That there is an inseparable connection between wrong-doing and punishment, is an organic instinct of conscience: and instinct never deceives. Retribution is "the other half of crime." The sanction implied in the moral law is the violent restoration of the moral order 127

The moral law, then, apprehended, not made, by our practical reason, implies that right is rewarded and wrong punished. And here is the principle which makes our criminal justice just. Penal jurisprudence is simply a moral judgment exhibited in visible form 129

At the root of criminal law lie two great instincts, to avenge and to deter. Both must be recognised and reckoned with. In the State the instinct of revenge is moralised, and becomes, as retributive justice, an expression of the ethical might of the social organism . 130

The primitive rule was the *lex talionis*, and the principle of that rule is everlastingly true, although, in our deeper apprehension of the sacredness of human personality, we put aside the cruder application once given to it by archaic jurisprudence . . . 131

Whether, then, we view the matter historically or philosophically, punishment is primarily vindictive: the magistrate is the dispenser of righteous retribution: "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," the wrath being that which is *due* to the wrongdoer as a person: the penalty which, by the eternal law of Right, is the proper complement of his crime 134

But the concept of crime rests upon "the faculty of acting according to the consciousness of laws": and the supreme question, in the world of thought, in these days, is whether that faculty exists . . . 135

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For a plain man Dr. Johnson's rough-and-ready settlement of it, "Sir, we *know* that our will is free and there's an end of it," may suffice. For the philosophical justification of this dictum, it is enough to appeal to the categorical imperative of conscience. "I ought" implies "I can" 136

The self-determining power of the will generates that moral responsibility which supplies the *rationale* of criminal justice. It alone gives validity to the idea of Duty 138

CHAPTER VI.

THE ETHICS OF POLITICS.

Nothing is more clear than that politicians generally, in the present day, regard politics as a game to be played, first, for themselves, and then for their party, without any regard to ethical considerations . 141

Such is the unquestionable fact. And it is an expression of the belief that public morality is quite a different thing from private morality: that "of the classes of obligations which constitute private morals, only one, namely justice, has a place in public morals at all: and that the justice which finds place in public morals is totally different from the justice which relates to individuals: and consists mainly in moderation and kindly prudence." . . 146

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But this prudential rule of right and wrong in politics, is nothing else, in the long run, than respect for force: it is the application of the doctrine of Hobbes that right and wrong, justice and injustice, "have their strength, not from their own nature but from the fear of evil consequences on their rupture" . . 148

The special kind of force now dominant is the force of numbers disguised as public opinion, which is regarded as the very source and fount of right, of law, of justice, in the public order 150

In opposition to this doctrine, it must be maintained that an absolute standard of Right and Wrong rules throughout the universe: that to follow what reason speaking through conscience dictates as right, is the one rule of public as of private life . . . 152

Politics ought to be conceived of as a branch of ethics. The public conscience should dominate customs, legislation, diplomacy. It is as "the passionless expression of general right" that the laws of a nation have a claim on our obedience . . . 152

And so the limit of that claim is clear also. The first principle of a man's ethical life is "to reverence his conscience as his king." If the law formulated by the community conflicts with the law within, it must be disobeyed 154

That Universal Reason which is the Supreme Rule of Ethics, dominant over nations as over the individuals of whom they are composed, can no more be violated by nations than by individuals, without incurring the retribution which is the other half of crime 156

CHAPTER VII.

THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM.

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What is called Democracy, that is the advent of the masses to political power, is the dominant fact of modern civilisation 159

It is manifestly impossible for the numerical majority, in our country, to comprehend by their own wit and labour, even the elements of the political problems which they are called upon to decide. Who shall guide them? 160

The newspaper press undertakes that office. What are the rights and duties appertaining to it? . . 161

The rights of the journalist may be summed up in the phrase "the liberty of the press": liberty to state facts, to argue upon them, to denounce abuses, to advocate reforms 162

Such is the right of the journalist. What is the corresponding duty? It may be expressed in one word: Veracity. The liberty of the press, like all liberty, means action within the great principles of ethics. The masses have a right to expect from the journalist what his reason and conscience dictate to him as truth 165

This is the journalist's vocation in ideal. What is it in fact? Probably, as a rule, truth is the last thing the average journalist thinks about . . . 167

Unquestionably, journalism is conducted under conditions peculiarly inimical to the virtue of Veracity . . 171

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And, perhaps, it would not be too much to say that, during the last quarter of a century, the newspaper press has done more than anything else to de-ethicise public life 173

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ETHICS OF PROPERTY.

In the great question between Capital and Labour, now before the world, the ultimate appeal must be to the moral law. It is worth while therefore to consider it from the point of view of Rational Ethics . . 174

Is there such a thing as a natural right to private property? 177

There is. First, because a propensity to personal acquisition is a component of man's constitution: an organic instinct, to which private property corresponds . 177

And, secondly, and far more, because private property is necessary to the full idea of human personality. Its ultimate ground is necessity, issuing from the reason of things 178

But the right to property—like all rights—becomes valid only in civil society: it is conditioned by correlative duties towards society, varying in extent according to the degree of civilisation and the circumstances of the age, and is held in subordination to the supreme claims of the social organism. It must be *organised* in the commonwealth: that is, brought under the dominion of reason 181

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Is it possible to maintain that the existing distribution of wealth is reasonable? a division which "instead of being proportioned to the labour and abstinence of the individual, is almost in an inverse ratio to it" . 183

It is not reasonable: it is not right (the two words mean the same). "It is unjust, it cannot last" . . 185

One remedy proposed is "the transformation of Civilisation into Socialism." But this remedy is worse than the disease 188

The importance of Socialism does not lie in its crude and monstrous theories, but in this: that it is "alike the inevitable and indispensable protest of the working classes, and the aspiration after a better order of things" 193

The only foundation on which that better order can be reared is the moral law 193

Aquinas goes to the root of the matter when he teaches that to render property lawful "the order of reason must be observed: that is to say, that a man possess justly what he owns, and that he use it in a proper manner for himself and others" . . . 194

Unrestricted competition is unjust: the necessity of the seller does not render it right to underpay him: to give him less than a *justum pretium* is to rob him. Moreover to constitute freedom of contract there must be parity of condition 194

As a matter of fact, to much of the wealth of the rich classes in modern Europe the saying "La propriété c'est le vol," is strictly applicable . . . 196

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But even if a man's property has been justly acquired, to render his possession of it valid according to the moral law, there lies upon him the obligation of employing it in a proper manner for himself and others. He has not a right to do what he likes, but only what he ought, with his own, which after all is his own only in a qualified sense. The community is his overlord: and the very constitution of civilised life gives rise to the duty that ownership must be made a common good to the community . . . 199

So much is involved in "the order of reason" regarding property. The task before the world is the reorganisation of industry in accordance with these dictates of the moral law 199

CHAPTER IX.

THE ETHICS OF MARRIAGE.

Our existing civilisation unquestionably rests upon marriage, as the Christian religion has shaped it: its law, indissolubility, grounded upon the principle of the spiritual equality of woman with man . . 203

But the State is everywhere ceasing to be Christian, and one result of its secularisation is the supercession of the old sacramental foundation of the social order by what is called "civil marriage": a purely secular contract, in which the indissoluble character of marriage disappears 207

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"Advanced thinkers" find the nuptial tie, even thus relaxed, too stringent, and desire to substitute for it "a new sex relationship," which "both as to form and substance" shall be "a pure question of taste, a simple matter of agreement, between the man and the woman, in which neither society nor the State would have any need or right to interefere, unless it result in children" 209

They proceed on the assumption that Christianity is hopelessly discredited. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that this is so. Does it follow that the doctrine concerning right and wrong in sexual relations, which, as a matter of fact, the world has received from Christianity, is also discredited? . 210

Most certainly not. The ethics taught by Christianity are not an appendage to its theological mysteries. Its Author left no code of scientific morality. The moral law is ascertained, not from the announcements of prophets, apostles, and evangelists, but from a natural and permanent revelation of the Reason . . 211

As regards the ethics of marriage, Christianity has unquestionably promoted a truer conception of them by its assertion of the fact and the rights of human personality 212

And by the new type of womanhood introduced by it, and idealised in the Madonna. "Born of a woman" is the true account of the modern home, with all its moralising influences 213

Christianity has vindicated the conception of marriage, in its nature essentially sacramental, as the blending of two personalities in a social organism embracing their whole existences, "no longer twain, but one" . 214

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This is the true ideal of marriage, the unity and indissolubility whereof issue from the nature of things in their ethical relations. Christianity did but adopt and consecrate that ideal, which "from the beginning" was in the counsels of Eternal Reason . 216

Nothing short of that ideal is adequate. And only when it is recognised is the position of woman established on its true ethical basis 218

CHAPTER X.

THE ETHICS OF ART.

In the Art—taking the word in the widest sense—of any period, is the truest indication of its ethical character 221

The art of the nineteenth century is, speaking generally, barren in nobleness, void of dignity, and wanting in the attribute of soul 222

The reason is because in the present day there is "a decline in the more poetical and religious aspects of man's nature": and poetry and religion mean inspiration and life. Art has lost its height and depth because it has lost "the ideal perspective": it has been derationalised and converted into mere mechanism for the promotion of the Materialistic "summum bonum": agreeable feeling . . 225

The true theory of art is excellently formulated by Kant, "Only the productions of liberty, that is of a volition

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which founds its actions upon reason, ought to be called art." Art seeks the reason and essence of things. It is the external manifestation of the idea: the revelation of the invisible reality through the senses: an economy or accommodation whereby transcendental verities are made accessible to us . . 227

It springs from the same fount as morality; both being expressions of the same immutable truth, different sides or aspects of the same thing: of reason, order, harmony, right. Hence its ethical laws. Desire for the beautiful or noble, which is the common element of all the virtues, is also the basis of art . . 230

The laws of art are the laws of beauty. But the beautiful is of the intellect, not of the senses, which merely supply the artist with his raw material. The end of the intellect is truth: and "the beautiful is the splendour of the true" 231

It is "as absorbed in will, or thought, or spiritualised nature," that the passions are fit material for art. The test of the moral worth of a work of art is whether the impression left upon a healthy mind is sensuous or spiritual 232

This applies to art, in the form of literature, as much as to the arts of design. Art—all art—is essentially one: and is governed by the same great laws, the same immutable principles. Whether it is informed by any true ideal, is the ultimate ethical criterion, in judging of a work of art as in judging of that social life whereof it is the counterfeit presentment . 233

Banish the ideal from the life of man, and he sinks below the level of the lower animals. Such is the natural fruit of the philosophy which rejects the only rational

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conception of Right and Wrong, and degrades to the region of molecular physics, conceptions properly appertaining to the domains of the organic and the spiritual 235

APPENDIX.

The Province of Physics, a Rejoinder to Professor Huxley 237-264

I have to thank the Editors of the Fortnightly Review and the Forum for permission to incorporate in the present work certain contributions of mine to their respective Magazines. And I am indebted to my friend Mr. John Sharman Franey for his kindness in reading the proof-sheets of this book, and in favouring me with several valuable suggestions.

W. S. L.

ON RIGHT AND WRONG.

CHAPTER I.

THE CRISIS OF ETHICS.

I SUPPOSE the words Right and Wrong enter more largely into human life than any other. They are among the first words uttered by children at their play: "You have no right to do this!" "That is wrong!" They are most profusely used, and abused, in the commonest affairs of daily existence, by the most ignorant and uncultivated, and generally—which is noteworthy—with an appeal to the universal validity of the conceptions they represent, as though, in the secure judgment of all the earth, the gainsayer must be in bad faith. Everyone talks of his rights as if they were the easiest things in the world to pronounce upon. And yet how difficult are the problems which may be raised regarding even the simplest and least questioned of them. Parental right, for example, springing as it does from the most sacred of human

relations, how easy to deride and decry it, if we regard merely the blind irrational impulse to which each individual, the accident of an accident, owes his procreation. Again, think how large a part of human activity is consumed in the endeavour, mostly fruitless, to settle questions of right. The whole machinery of jurisprudence, with its legislatures, its courts of various instance, its judges, advocates, and attorneys, attends continually upon this very thing. But the glorious uncertainty of the law has become a byword. Fleets and armies are still the last resource of civilisation for determining the rights of nations. Now, as in the time of Brennus, the sword is the ultimate makeweight in the scale of justice. It may be said that the history of right, throughout the ages, is one long martyrdom. It is ever being crucified afresh and put to an open shame.

Speaking generally, however, we may assert that the idea of Right* has hitherto been venerated by

* Austin, in his *Province of Jurisprudence Determined* (p. 257), has a long note on what he calls "the two meanings" of "right," "which ought to be carefully distinguished." "The noun substantive, 'a right,'" he observes, "signifies that which jurists call a faculty . . . . but the expression 'right,' when it is used as an adjective, is equivalent to the adjective 'just.'" And he complains that "these widely different, though not unconnected terms . . . . are confounded by many of the German writers on the sciences of law and morality, as by Kant, for example." The truth is that Austin, whose metaphysical attainments were of no very high order, was himself misled by the Utilitarian doctrine which, from first to last, held captive his noble mind; in spite of his efforts, at times, to break away from it, into the freedom of worthier con-

mankind at large as supersensuous, absolute, divine. The rights, whether of nations or of the individuals of whom they are composed, have been held to rest upon an ethical sanction, and that upon noumenal truth. Justice has been accounted a matter of the will, according to the dictum of the Roman jurisconsult, *Justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi.* Culpability has been referred, not to the exterior act, but to the interior mental state, *Mens rea facit reum.* The world, on the whole, has not doubted that what is right exists by nature, that universal obligation is a prime note of it, that an infringement of it entails, according to the "unwritten and immutable laws of the gods," retributive suffering upon the wrong-doer. These were,

ceptions. The German writers, whom he censures, saw clearly what was hidden from his eyes, that the two terms are not merely "not unconnected," but are, in their ultimate source, one; that it is the very office of what is called *Naturrecht*, as Trendelenburg expresses it, "so to deduce the multiplicity of rights from the self-same fount, that they may be exhibited as governed by the unity of an inherent co-ordinating thought." I know not where to turn for a better exposition of this most important matter, than to the clear and cogent thinker, from the introduction to whose *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* I am quoting. The first fifteen sections of that admirable work are a masterpiece of luminous and logical discussion, issuing in the conclusion: "The separation of Law and Morality, of Legislation and Ethics, which results in the mere external legality of the Pharisees, must be abandoned. That false independence of Jurisprudence, which claims to be regarded as an advance of science, has not only perverted Right in its theory, but has stripped it of its dignity in the life of men; has led to representations of it as mere mechanism, and has emptied it of its vivifying idea."

for long ages, the generally accepted data of moral philosophy. I do not, of course, mean that the vast majority of men have ever held them as philosophers. They made their way into the popular mind through the religious traditions which are the only philosophies available for the multitude. The morality of the old civilisation of Egypt, of India, of Judea, was bound up with their religions. The same may be said of the ancient phase of Hellenic and, more strongly still, of Roman civilisation. It is the special glory of Buddhism that it upheld the dominion of the moral law over gods, and men, and the whole of sentient existence. To Christianity the human race owes the supreme enforcement of the autonomy of conscience as the voice of Him whom it is better to obey than man. But now the old ethical conceptions are everywhere falling into discredit. The very principles on which the ideas of right and wrong have hitherto rested are very widely questioned, nay, more than questioned. "No one," observes a thoughtful writer, "can deny either the reality or the intensity of the actual crisis of morality. Nor is the crisis confined to certain questions of casuistry. On the contrary, it extends to the most general rules of conduct, and, through those rules, to the very principles of ethics themselves."*

I believe these words of M. Beaussire to be profoundly true. It seems to me that we are living in a crisis of the world's history; a great crisis, for

* Beaussire, *Les Principes de la Morale*, p. 26.

it is a moral crisis. Fifty years ago Jouffroy wrote his celebrated article, "Comment finissent les dogmes." He had in view religious dogmas only, and especially the distinctive tenets of Christianity. He might now, were he alive, discuss the question in a much wider sense. Philosophy, as well as religion, has its traditional bases. Certain it is, as mere matter of history, apart from all controversy, that the ethical ideas which have hitherto ruled the conduct of mankind, have rested upon metaphysical *credenda*. As certain is it that the postulates of the old philosophy—a First Cause, by which the universe was brought into existence, and that for a good end, the personality of man, his limited and conditioned liberty and moral responsibility, the immateriality and immortality of the Ego, the absolute nature of ethics—certain it is that these things are now very commonly put aside as antiquated delusions. Kant is no less discredited than Jesus Christ in the eyes of the prophets of Materialism. The Practical Reason fares as badly as the Christian Revelation at the hands of the sages of Positivism. Nay, every newspaper hack of Continental Liberalism is ready with his gibe at M. de l'Absolu and Mdlle. lÂ'me. In the novel, in the play, in the babble of the drawing-room or the dinner-table, the most august and venerable of ethical doctrines are called in question and denied. Even the supreme authority of conscience is impugned. To its "thou must" the answer is prompt: "On what compulsion must

I? tell me that!" Its "dogmatism" is contemptuously rejected, for physical science—the only science—is supposed to have given an explanation of it, fatal alike to its authoritativeness and its coerciveness. No longer may we account of it with St. Paul, as the divine law written in the heart. It is exhibited to us as nothing more than "the capitalised experience of the tribe": its obligation sublimated selfishness, its sanction a brain track. "The theory of an independent or autonomous conscience," Mr. Leslie Stephen confidently declares, is "part of an obsolete form of speculation."* Certain it is that every civilisation which the world has as yet known, has been reared upon an ethical, not a physical foundation. A common belief in dogmas of morality—I use the word dogmas advisedly—has hitherto been the very condition of social cohesion. To speak of Europe only, its public order has ever been based upon the conviction, deep down in the hearts of all, at the very root of their moral and spiritual being, that man was encompassed by duties—duties which, however grudgingly performed or brutally violated, in countless instances, were everywhere undoubtedly recognised as the divinely imposed laws of life. So long as a moral code exists, and is generally acknowledged and revered, the fact of individual deflections from it, whether they be more or less numerous, is of comparatively small importance. It

* *Science of Ethics*, p. 314.

is the invalidation of the moral code, the prevalence of ethical agnosticism, the scepticism as to all first principles of conduct, which I account so portentous a sign of our own times. "Deest remedii locus, ubi, quæ vitia fuerunt, mores fiunt."

Now, to what must we attribute this crisis of ethics? I answer, without hesitation, to the advance which Materialism has made in the general mind. And here, in order to make good my way, I must enter upon an explanation. "Words are grown so false, I am loth to prove reason with them," says the Clown in *Twelfth Night*. The saying constantly comes to my mind in dealing with the philosophical controversies of the present day. Rigorous definition, careful analysis, precise classification, are no longer in favour. It is an age of loose thinking, and of looser writing; of "idle words, servants to shallow fools." Never, perhaps, was there an age in which the trade of the sophist, whose business it is "to make the worse reason appear the better," was carried on so successfully. Never was there an age in which a writer who feels that he is "a teacher or nothing," had greater need of well-considered and accurate language. It is necessary, therefore, that before proceeding further with my argument, I should state clearly what I mean by Materialism. There are those who would restrict it to a doctrine now discredited for

higher minds. What we know of living forces, of the real properties of bodies, is irreconcilable with the old notion of matter, reduced merely to solidity and extension. Our better acquaintance with the physiology of the sense organs should have made an end of the sensism, which Professor Clifford contemptuously calls "the crass Materialism of the savage." It lingers, however, in the lower intellectual regions. Nay, more, it is still widely held there. "Il est des morts qu'il faut qu'on tue," we may say of this "crass Materialism." My present point, however, is that this coarse and vulgar theory is by no means the only form of Materialism. Nor is it the form under which Materialism is most potently working in the world just now. The more subtle doctrines which have arisen upon the ruins of the old materialistic hypothesis are, in all essentials, identical with it. Positivism, Phenomenism, and much that passes current as Agnosticism, are mere varieties of Materialism; sublimated expressions of it, perhaps, but true expressions, having in them the root of the matter.

Now here I am conscious of a difficulty. Is it fair, one may be asked, to impose the name of Materialist upon those who, more or less energetically, repudiate it? I think it is fair, and, more, that it is a duty, if the name truly describes them. Take, for example, the late Mr. Clifford. As we have just seen, he rejects, emphatically, "the crass Materialism of the savage"; but only to substitute for

it a Materialism which is, indeed, more refined, but which is also, as it seems to me, more irrational. His biographer, Sir Frederick Pollock,* claims that his view is, in truth, "idealist monism, a very subtle form of idealism," and points out that his conception of the ultimate reality is "mind; not mind as we know it in the complex forms of thought and feeling, but the simpler elements out of which thought and feeling are built up." Well, of course, Materialism affects to be monistic, for it seeks to explain the whole universe in terms of matter. But how is Mr. Clifford's monism idealistic? The element, of which "even the simplest feeling is a complex," he calls "mind-stuff." "Matter," he tell us, "is the mental picture of which mind is the thing represented. Reason, intelligence, and volition are properties of a complex, which is made up of elements themselves not rational, not intelligent, not conscious." Is it possible, Sir Frederick Pollock himself being judge, to call this doctrine idealism? This "mind-stuff," which, we are told, is the thing-in-itself, of which "a moving molecule of organic matter possesses a small piece," and which, "when matter takes the complex form of a living human brain, takes the form of a human consciousness, having intelligence and volition"—how is it possible to account of this "mind-stuff" as anything but matter?

* See his very interesting *Introduction* to *Lectures and Essays* by the late William Kingdon Clifford," p. 39.

Again, consider the teaching of Professor Huxley. With whatever rhetorical ornaments he may gild it, what is its *practical* outcome but Materialism?* I am well aware of his opinion that the question "whether there is really anything anthropomorphic, even in man's nature," will ever remain an open one. I do not lose sight of his recognition of "the necessity of cherishing the noblest and most human of man's emotions by worship, for the most part of the silent sort, at the altar of the Unknown and Unknowable." But, on the other hand, I remember his positive declaration that "consciousness is a function of nervous matter, when that nervous matter has attained a certain degree of organisation." I remember, too, his confident anticipation that "we shall sooner or later arrive at a mechanical equivalent of consciousness, just as we have arrived at a mechanical equivalent of heat." And I do not forget that singularly powerful passage in his *Lay Sermons*—who that has once read it can forget it?—in which he enforces what he deems "the great truth," that "the progress of science has, in all ages, meant, and now, more than ever, means, the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant gradual banishment, from all regions of human thought, of what we call spirit and spontaneity;" that, "as surely as every future grows out of past and present, so will the physiology of the future

* See the *Appendix*, pp. 245-262.

gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is co-extensive with knowledge, with feeling, and with action."

Once more. Let us turn to a teacher more widely influential, perhaps, than even Mr. Huxley. I mean Mr. Herbert Spencer. He, too, recognises "an Unknown and Unknowable Power without beginning or end in time." He tells us expressly, in his *Psychology*, that consciousness cannot be a mode of movement, and that if we must choose between these two modes of being, as the generative and primitive mode, it would be the first, and not the last, which he would choose. These sayings certainly do not sound like Materialism. I think, however, that if we closely examine his writings, we shall find the persistence of force his one formula. With that—if you will permit him to use it in a double sense—he will bring for you life out of the non-living; morality out of the unmoral; the psychical out of the physical. True it is that this "force" is presented to us as a manifestation of the Unknowable. But what difference can the Unknowable make to the mass of men? I am far from denying that to Mr. Spencer himself, and his more subtle and refined disciples, it may make a great deal of difference, to be able to turn from his speculative physics, to worship, in taciturnity, they know not what. But systems of philosophy penetrate the general mind, and exercise influence over the vast mass of men, who are not

subtle and refined. And, unquestionably, the portion of Mr. Spencer's philosophy which is most widely received, and believed, is not his doctrine of the Unknowable. "Parson, this is no time for cōnundrums," said the dying Confederate soldier, to the minister of religion, who inquired, "Do you believe in God?" To the vast majority of the combatants in the battle of life, Mr. Spencer's Unknowable must be a mere conundrum; and they give it up. For them, his teaching assumes the form of a crude disbelief in whatever lies out of the senses' grasp. He calls his system "transfigured realism." But the multitude are, and ever must be, plain realists. I feel very sure that the practical effect of Mr. Spencer's philosophy has been, to promote the elevation of materialism into the reigning creed of the day in the English-speaking races. That all beings, all modes and forms of existence, are but transformations of force, obeying only mechanical laws, the laws of movement—this, assuredly, is what Mr. Spencer's doctrine practically amounts to, if there is any meaning in words. He, indeed, protests against the application to matter of such epithets as "gross" or "brute." He delights to expatiate on its wonderful properties; and in his latest work he speaks of "a universe everywhere alive; alive, if not in a restricted sense, at least in a general sense." Still the fact remains that Mr. Spencer seeks to interpret all things in terms of matter and motion, and holds

life to be a mere result of physical forces. There are only two conceivable hypotheses open to us.* Either Nature is the outcome of Intellect, or Intellect is the outcome of Nature. Mr. Spencer's teaching, considered as a whole, is an elaborate argument on behalf of the latter of these hypotheses. And what is this but Materialism?

Mr. Spencer, indeed, calls himself a Realist. Professor Huxley is sometimes called an Idealist: a description which he would doubtless reject, although there are certain passages in his writings which warrant it.† And, as we have seen, the friend who has written so well about the late Professor Clifford, calls him an Idealistic Monist. Sir Frederick Pollock, indeed, goes on to observe, "It is hardly worth while to dispute about names, when more serious things remain for discussion." These words seem to me in themselves a revelation, not, indeed, of light, but of darkness; they give us a glimpse of chaos and the void inane. Surely names are the signs of, nay the substitutes for, ideas; formulas summing up for us, briefly, it may be a train of reasoning, a series of sensations, a multitude of images. Unless we use them as parrots do, which, to be sure, is the habit of many people, they stand to us in the place of things. Hence the immense importance, upon which I have already touched, of exact terminology. If our nomenclature is vague, we shall be continually mistaking one thing for another.

* See p. 63. † See the Appendix, pp. 242, 253.

"Pantheism or Pottheism—what matter, so long as it is true?" Mr. Carlyle asked. But my present inquiry is not if the teaching, whether of the late Mr. Clifford, of Mr. Huxley, of Mr. Herbert Spencer, is true, but what that teaching really is. And my contention is that all these three gifted men, whom I select as types of a host of less famous writers widely influential on English thought, must in strictness be reckoned as Materialists. All three do, in effect, restrict our knowledge to the phenomenal universe, of which consciousness and will are, for them, fortuitous or necessary products. All three do, in effect, teach that the laws of thought, are, in the last resort, only sensations, or induced tendencies of the nervous system. All three do, in effect, express the entire man by matter, his intellectual and moral being as well as his corporal frame. Now I am far from asserting that there is anything to prevent us from being spiritualists in psychology, while in cosmology we accept the dynamical explanation, and confess that everywhere in the universe are forces and centres of forces. But that is very different from the view which regards intellect as a mode of motion, or as a manifestation of physical energy. "The faculties of the mind, feeling and will," writes Mr. Frederic Harrison, "are directly dependent upon the physical organs. To talk to me of mind, feeling, will, in the absence of physical organs, is to use language which to me,

at least, is pure nonsense." Mr. Harrison's creed, it would appear, may be summed up in the simple symbol, "I believe in the brain, the viscera, and the reproductive apparatus." He cannot conceive of Deity save as abdominous. This very eloquent and very positive writer has the courage of his opinions. But, as it seems to me, the doctrines of Professor Clifford, of Professor Huxley, of Mr. Herbert Spencer, in their ultimate resolution, are substantially at one with his. Whatever differences divide these eminent men from one another, they all agree in putting aside, as unverifiable, everything which the senses cannot verify; everything beyond the bounds of physical science; everything which cannot be brought into a laboratory and dealt with chemically.* Their new Phenomenism is simply old Materialism, decked out in incongruous metaphysical trappings, borrowed chiefly from Hume and Kant. It will be found, I say, in the long run, that there are two, and only two schools of thought, which I shall denominate Transcendentalism and Materialism, until better terms are forthcoming. Transcendentalism looks beyond experience for the explanation of the universe, and holds it as a fundamental truth that the nature of our thinking being imposes

* Such appears to me the inevitable logical issue of the propositions to which they have committed themselves: and I maintain that we have a right, nay, that we are bound, to debit them with the consequences of their own premises. See the Appendix, pp. 256-8.

our way of conceiving, of valuing, and even of apprehending sensible things. Materialism maintains that in those sensible things must be sought the explanation of our ideas and of our wills. Transcendentalism postulates a First Cause possessing perfect freedom, and recognises true causality in man also, with his endowment of limited and conditioned liberty of the will. Materialism holds that we can know nothing beyond phenomena, denies causation, in the proper sense of the word, and demands, in the words of Mr. Huxley, "the banishment from all regions of human thought of what we call spirit and spontaneity." Transcendentalism insists upon the unity of our consciousness, upon the *ichheit des Ego*—the selfhood of the Me—as the original and ultimate fact of man's existence. Materialism dissolves the Ego into a stream of sensations, makes of consciousness an accidental and superficial effect of mechanism, and exhibits man as a mere sequence of physical action and reaction. Transcendentalism maintains the absolute nature of ethics: the immutable distinction between moral good and moral evil. Materialism refers everything to heredity, temperament, environment, convention. Transcendentalism affirms the supersenuous, yes, let us venture upon the word, the supernatural, in man, and finds irrefragable evidence of it in

> "this main miracle, that thou art thou,
> With power on thine own act, and on the world."

Materialism makes of the soul, with Professor Tyndall, "a poetical rendering of a phenomenon which refuses the yoke of ordinary mechanical laws," explains will and conscience as merely a little force and heat organised, and, in Coleridge's pungent phrase, "peeps into death to look for life, as monkeys put their hands behind a looking-glass." Such are the two schools of thought which are dividing the intellect of the world.

Now, I take it, that one of the most striking signs of the times is the extent to which Materialism has triumphed throughout Europe. Fifty or sixty years ago it might well have seemed as though Kant had made an end in Germany of the doctrine which, derived by the *philosophes* of the last century from Locke, had been carried to its logical issue by Cabanis and Condillac. In England the school of Reid was, in some sort, doing a similar work. In France the influence of Royer Collard, Maine de Biran, Jouffroy, and Cousin—all, whatever their differences, firmly attached to the main principles of Transcendentalism—was dominant. In Italy the works of Pasquale Galuppi had diffused some knowledge of the critical philosophy, and Rosmini's *New Essay on the Origin of Ideas* had made its way into many seminaries. Now, all is changed. In Germany a school has arisen based on the empirical doctrines supposed to have been

for ever discarded, but giving to them a new and more precise form. Of its many able exponents it must suffice here to mention only one, Herr Büchner, whose book on *Force and Matter* has had an immense success in his own country, and has been translated, I believe, into well-nigh all European languages. M. Janet, no mean judge, reckons it "the tersest, frankest, and clearest system of Materialism which has appeared in Europe since the famous *Système de la Nature*." It is true that in Germany the influence of these new Materialistic doctrines would appear to be on the wane. They are not specially fitted to recommend themselves to the Teutonic mind, with its innate bias to idealism. And they have been vigorously combated by a number of extremely able writers, foremost among whom must be reckoned Lange and Hartmann, Ulrici and Lotze. Yet no one can carefully study contemporary German literature without perceiving how potential still is the school which relies wholly upon the positive sciences, and puts aside entirely psychology and metaphysics. Its prevalence in England may be sufficiently indicated by merely mentioning the names of the three accomplished scientists at whose teaching we have already glanced, the late Professor Clifford, Professor Huxley, and Mr. Herbert Spencer, not to speak of Professor Tyndall. But if we would see this way of thinking have free course, if we would fully realise the inglorious liberty of the sons of

matter, it is upon France that we must gaze. In that country, at the present moment, the most widely influential school is unquestionably the medico-atheistic: the school which inculcates sensism of the grossest kind, which reeks of the brothel and the torture trough. "A very superficial and gross Positivism," M. Beaussire tells us, "seems to have taken possession of well-nigh all souls." * A remnant, indeed, is left in the higher regions of French thought, which has not bowed the knee to the Baal of Dead Mechanism, nor joined itself to the Dung God. But unquestionably the two greatest intellectual forces in France at the present time are M. Renan and M. Taine, neither of whom can be claimed by Transcendentalism. I do not lose sight of the many magnificent passages in which M. Renan pays homage to the supersensuous, the ideal, the divine. Yet there is ever before him the haunting suspicion that, after all, Gavroche may be right; that "jouir et mépriser" may be the last word of the true philosopher. There are those who find the secret of his transitions of thought, in the famous *mot* of M. Sardou's comedy, "J'ai assez pratiqué le monde pour savoir qu'on n'a jamais que la conviction de ses intérêts." There are those, again, who tell us, that in his profound and serene

* *Les Principes de la Morale*, p. 4. The extremely striking Introduction—whence my citation is taken—attracted much notice when it appeared originally in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of August 1, 1884.

intellect, every passing phase of contemporary speculation is reflected, like the clouds in the bosom of the calm ocean. I am not ambitious to decide which explanation is the true one. It is enough for me to point to his own account of himself, which is that he does not know whether or no he is a Materialist. "Je ne sais bien si je suis spiritualiste ou matérialiste. Le but du monde, c'est l'idée: mais je ne connais pas un cas où l'idée se soit produite sans matière: je ne connais pas d'esprit pur, ni d'œuvre d'esprit pur." M. Taine has of late years been most prominently before the world as the first living historian of his country, perhaps of any country. But we must not forget that his high place, among contemporary thinkers, was first won as a philosopher. A closely knit system his is, indeed. But what a system! A system of mechanism and fatality, dealing with the universe as an immense and eternal series of visible movements, more or less complex, all reducible to invisible movements, obeying the laws of physics. Reason, Intelligence, Will, Personality are for him mere metaphors. He explains them by mechanism and movement. The intellect he regards as a thinking machine, just as the stomach is a digesting machine. He will speak of the soul, if you please; but, like Mr. Tyndall, he warns you, that you must take it merely as a poetical expression, a rhetorical figure. With reason did Michelet, after reading his admirably written book *On Intelligence*, exclaim in

dismay, "Il me prend mon moi." France, after all, is still the country in which the movements of the European mind may be most fruitfully studied. If Germany is the mine of ideas, France it is which mints them and makes them current coin. Intellectually considered, Italy and Spain are little more than outlying provinces of France, and her influence upon English and Teutonic thinkers, if less magisterial, is hardly less effective.

I consider, then, that if we survey the higher thought of Europe, as a whole, we must find it largely given over to Materialism. And if we turn to the more popular literature, in which is the truest expression of society, the same tale is unfolded. How largely has it lost itself in a so-called "realism," devoid of that ethical sentiment, without which, Goethe has well observed, "the actual is the vulgar, the low, the gross." The art of the novelist in particular, how very generally is it degraded to the delineation of what the author of *Sapho*—no mean authority on such a subject—calls "ces amours de chair;" those merely animal loves, wherein, he tells us, "there is no esteem, no respect for the object of the passion, and brutality ever wells up, whether in anger or in caresses." What a portent is that large and ever-growing school of "naturalistic" fiction of which M. Zola is the honoured and prosperous chief, and which is so eagerly read, and so largely imitated, throughout the civilised world! "Toute méta-

physique m'épouvante" this master tells us. His works, he claims, are conceived in the true "scientific" spirit. Matter is for him the only reality, and in its honour he raises pæans "like the shrieks of a hyæna at discovering that the universe is all actually carrion." But it is not merely in the literature of the erotic passion, of the genetic impulse, that the mark of the beast is plainly visible. How many a grave writer of our day has acquired a reputation for originality, simply upon the strength of a fantastic physical terminology. Instead of intellect, he speaks of nervous centres; instead of life, of the play of cellular activities; instead of mental energy, of cerebral erethism. And his readers, piquing themselves on their distrust of everything outside the sphere of what they call facts, "wonder with a foolish face of praise." In truth every branch of intellectual activity bears witness to the advance of Materialism in the popular mind; to the dying out of the old spiritual and ideal types. Thus, in politics, we see the domination of the brute force of numbers, of majorities told by head, becoming almost everywhere an accomplished fact. The instincts and passions of the masses are accepted as the supreme law, in the place of justice and virtue, of reason and religion. Art, too, has bowed her sacred head to the Materialistic yoke. The true function of the artist, as of the metaphysician, is to seek the reason and essence of things. But while to the philosopher

this reason and essence are revealed in a principle, in a general conception, to the artist they are revealed in a concrete form, as individual beauty. Both are seekers after truth; but the beautiful is the splendour of the true, and the sense of beauty is the light of the intellect. Materialism quenches that light. All that the artist now usually aims at, is to copy exactly, to reproduce phenomena. And here, indeed, he attains some measure of success, especially if the phenomena be of the lupanarian order. Well has Mr. Ruskin pronounced the art of our own time to be "a poor toy, petty or vile." Perhaps its portraits are its most valuable achievement. But their value is rather historical than artistic; they tell their own tale about the men and women of the age. What that tale is, a distinguished French critic not long ago pointed out. They are the abstract and brief chronicle, he observed, in which is written the spiritual history of our century. During the first half of it, the neck is thrown back, the head is upturned towards heaven, as if in quest of some ideal vision. As we draw towards our own days, the neck contracts, the head sinks nearer the shoulders, as though by the instinctive movement of a bull gathering himself up for the combat. It is because the battle of life has become more intense, because the mind is concentrated upon the material interests of the world. The habit of thought—curious verification of a law of Darwin's—has transformed the physical habit. A most delicate

and sensitive intellect—to whom British Philistinism, with its "certitude de mauvais goût," has largely paid the homage of its contumely and scorn —notes the same fact in his own way. The substitution of the laws of dead matter for the laws of the moral nature, the subjection of the soul to things, "écraser l'homme spirituel, dépersonaliser l'homme" is, as Amiel discerned, the dominant tendency of the times. It appears to me that if you survey the civilised world you find everywhere the same tokens. Everywhere I note the practical triumph of that earth-to-earth philosophy which will see nothing beyond "experience," which shuts off the approach of science to all that cannot be weighed and measured. Everywhere literature and art are losing themselves in the most vulgar sensuousness. Look throughout Europe, and what, in every country, are the great majority of the educated classes, who give the tone to the rest? Sceptics in religion, doubters in ethics, given over to industrialism, and to the exact sciences which minister to it, respecting nothing but accomplished fact and palpable force, with nerves more sensitive than their hearts, seeking to season the platitude of existence by a more or less voluptuous æstheticism, a more or less prurient hedonism. Such are the men of this new age. The intellectual atmosphere is charged with Materialism: and we may see the effects of its corroding action in all the most important departments of human life.

Consider only two. The bond of civil society is obedience to law, fenced round with penalties; but legislation rests upon the doctrine of human responsibility. "Will," Kant tells us, "is a kind of causality belonging to living agents in so far as they are rational; and freedom is such a property of causality as enables them to be efficient agents independently of outside causes determining them; as, on the other hand, necessity is that property of all irrational beings, which consists in their being determined to activity by the influence of outside causes."* This conception of human freedom underlies the notion of crime. Yes; the sense of crime is bound up with the belief in man's power of choice, and in his obligation to choose rightly. Where there is no faculty to judge of acts, as right or wrong, and to elect between them, as in a young child or a lunatic, there is no criminal responsibility, for there are no free persons. Personality manifests itself under the condition of free will, influenced but not coerced by motives; a will which has the power of choice between two alternative courses. Without that power, assuredly, there is no moral accountability. *Ought* is a meaningless word without *Can*. Now every school and variety of Materialism does, in effect, deny free will, be the denial more or less direct, more or less veiled.† Either

* *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Dritter Abschnitt.

† Thus, Mr. Clifford, in words, admits man's free agency; but, in fact, he reduces it to the mere shadow of a great name. It is with him nothing but the consciousness of being attracted, not propelled.

we are presented with the *à posteriori* argument, so elaborately worked out by Buckle, which aims at establishing, by the aid of statistics, that what we call morality is subject to fixed laws, like the course of the stars or the return of the seasons; that what we call virtue and vice are the results of physical causes, as regular as those which rule the germination of plants or the procreation of animals. Or the *à priori* road is followed, and we are told that though we can determine our actions according to our wishes, we cannot determine our wishes. The will—what we call will—is exhibited to us as always governed by the strongest motives, the force of which is not due to us, for we suffer them, we do not originate them. Do we reply, "True indeed; but though we do not create motives, we have in our own hands the culture of the will; we are the architects of our own characters, because character is formed by acts, is in fact a chain of acts, and it rests with us to forge the first link of that chain"? The rejoinder is, "You beg the question. That first act was determined by motives; it was produced by the influence of the strongest of the external causes. Your so-called free will is an illusion; it is really the sum of the many influences, of various kinds, which have been brought to bear upon a man, not merely individually, but during the countless generations of his existence in his ancestors. These have given to his soul—what we poetically call soul—its charac-

teristic ply. 'Such as we are made of, such we be.' What we call virtue and vice are, in M. Taine's striking phrase, 'merely products, like sugar and vitriol.' They are mainly the outcome of heredity. Francis of Assisi was necessarily a saint. Eccelino was necessarily a monster. Alexander Borgia could not by any means have become a Savonarola, nor Savonarola an Alexander Borgia. 'A poor devil can't command courage any more than he can make himself six feet high,' says Colonel Newcome, in extenuation of the cowardice of his nephew Barnes. No: nor can he command purity, or piety, or pitifulness. To doubt the necessary nature of an action, when a given motive is presented to a given character, is really, every whit as absurd as to doubt that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles." The conclusion to which Materialism, in all its schools, is inevitably led, is that will is not what Kant has defined it, but only a word to hide our ignorance of causation, a modality of instinctive acts, accompanied by a certain degree of sensation. But "with what is called metaphysical liberty, with freedom of volition, merit and demerit disappear too. Human causality, human spontaneity, human responsibility, all die before the 'uncreating word' of Materialism. Its doctrine of absolute irresponsibility makes an end of crime; its penal legislation can be nothing but *leges sine moribus vanæ*. For the sting of punishment is not the actual fact—"stone walls do not a

prison make"—but the moral disapprobation of which the fact is evidence. But how visit with moral disapprobation those who were incapable of doing anything but what they did? Poor victims of temperament, of heredity, of environment, they are to be pitied, not blamed; while, indeed, we seclude them for the protection of our persons and pockets; for we are the numerical majority, we can appeal to the *ultima ratio* of force, if to nothing higher. It is no fancy picture which I am now drawing. Fifty years ago Balzac wrote, 'Crime has been made poetical; tears are drivelled over assassins.' True as his words were then, they are even truer now. The idea of law as the embodied conscience of a nation of persons, the belief in justice, in the old sense, as something quite transcending mere expediency—*fiat justitia pereat mundus*—the conception of the civil magistrate as a minister of the retribution ordained by that justice as 'the other half of crime,' these things have well nigh died out from the popular mind, as, in place of the old spiritual principles of ethics, Materialism refers us to natural history." *

If law, with penal sanctions, be the bond of civil society, the family is certainly its foundation. But the family depends upon marriage. Now marriage, as it exists in Europe, is mainly the creation of Transcendentalism embodied in Christianity. Words-

* I quote this passage, slightly altering it, from my work, *A Century of Revolution*, 2nd Ed. p. 94.

worth gave utterance to no mere poetical fancy, but to the exact truth, when he wrote of "pure religion breathing household laws." What is becoming of marriage, and of that virtue of chastity of which it is the guardian, as society is ever more and more governed by purely physical canons? In another work I have pointed out what, as a matter of fact, was the effect upon matrimony of the Materialism dominant in France during the second half of the last century.* I may here note how the legislators of the first French Republic dealt with it. The National Convention reduced it to a civil contract terminable, under circumstances, by the decree of a secular tribunal. As a fitting pendant to this enactment, the law of the 12th of Brumaire, year II. of the Republic, placed natural children upon a footing of almost complete equality with children born in wedlock. Cambacérès, who acted as the *rapporteur* of the measure, would, indeed, have put them upon a completely equal footing. "The existing differences," he urged, "are the result of pride and superstition, they are ignominious and contrary to justice." The Materialists who now sit in the seat of those sages are bent upon continuing and completing their work. The recent law on divorce is but a beginning, quite insufficient to satisfy the aspirations of the bolder spirits, who pant for the entire abolition of marriage, upon the ground that it is "the tomb of love, and the chief

* *Chapters in European History*, vol. ii. pp. 153-159.

cause of stupidity (*abêtissement*) and ugliness (*enlaidissement*) in the human race." I suppose it must be conceded that stupidity and ugliness are the rule, rather than the exception, in the human race. But I have never been able to follow the reasoning which professes to find the source of these evils in matrimony, and their remedy in what is called "free love." Certain it is, however, that every school of Materialism tends to the substitution of ephemeral connections, of what Mr. John Morley terms, after Rousseau, "marriage according to the truth of nature," *—it is usually known as concubinage—for permanent and indissoluble wedlock, a "servitude" for which no sanction is found in physical science. "The moral and legal rule of marriage will be changed," M. Renan prophesied, not long ago, to the well-pleased students gathered around him at the *Grand-Véfour*; "the old Roman and Christian law will one day seem too exclusive, too narrow." And evidently M. Renan thinks that day of redemption drawing nigh. Certain it is that every school of Materialism, by banishing the spiritual element from love, reduces it to a mere physical function, and makes of chastity a monkish superstition. "La morale," a keen-witted Frenchman observed to me the other day, "est regardée par la Révolution comme une cléricale." And the abounding obscenity of literature and art in France

* See his account of Rousseau's mock espousals in vol. i. chap. iv. of his work on that philosopher.

is viewed with satisfaction by her present rulers, as the most effective weapon wherewith to combat this dreaded foe of the Third Republic. We in England have not as yet got so far as "advanced thinkers" across the Channel. But unquestionably we are on the road. The establishment of the Divorce Court has been a heavy blow to the old spiritual conceptions of wedlock, hitherto unquestioningly received among us. And who can estimate the demoralising effect of the flood of filth, vomited throughout the country, from that "common sewer of the realm"? The warnings of the saintly Keble "against profane dealing with holy matrimony" have received only too ample justification. On every side we may discern the tokens how the old reverence for woman, and for that virtue of chastity which is the very citadel of her moral being, is being sapped among us, as Materialism advances. The "Christian idea of purity," the Dean of St. Paul's observes, "has still a hold upon our society, imperfectly enough. Can we ask a more anxious question than whether this hold will continue? No one can help seeing, I think, many ugly symptoms. The language of revolt is hardly muttered: the ideas of purity, which we have inherited and thought sacred, are boldly made the note and reproach of 'the Christians.'" * "Ugly symptoms," indeed, abound on every side. Think — but briefly — of one of them: of the

* *Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, by R. W. Church, p. 131.

apotheosis of prostitution, which is a distinctive note of our epoch. And here let me guard myself against misconception. I know well that the poor in virtue, as the poor in worldly wealth, we have always with us. I know that in our present highly complex and artificial civilisation, the rude proceedings, whereby the men of simpler ages sought to enforce chastity, would be out of date. I think it probable that in any age they did more harm than good. True, at all events in the existing condition of society, is St. Augustine's warning, "Aufer meretrices de rebus humanis, turbaveris omnia libidinibus."* And, this being so, I believe the true function of the State is to control and regulate what it must regard as a necessary evil, and to minimise, as far as may be, the resultant mischiefs, moral and physical. These miserable women are the guardians of our domestic purity. The "macte virtute esto" of Cato was prompted by a true knowledge of human nature. But hitherto, the infamy of the courtesan's trade has, at least, been generally recognised. It has been reserved for the Materialism of the nineteenth century to make of this unclean creature an object of admiration, of envy, nay, of respect; the heroine of drama, the type of comedy, the theme of romance, the arbitress of fashion, the model curiously and and attentively studied by great ladies with daughters to marry, by *débutantes* with husbands

* *De Ordine*, l. ii. c. 4.

to find. "Hoc fonte derivata clades." No one can go much into "society" without learning how widely spread the corruption is. A taint of lubricity is in the air. The language of the *lupanar* is heard from virginal lips. Things which it is a shame even to speak of, are calmly discussed by beauty just out of the nursery. "Si un homme épouse une jeune femme, élevée à la moderne, il risque fort d'épouser une petite courtisane," debauched in mind, if physically intact. It is an observation of Bernard de Vaudricourt in *La Morte*, and is true of other countries than France. If any one wishes to see what woman becomes, when brought up without religious or metaphysical dogmas, in the school of physical facts, accepted as the only facts, let him survey SabineTallevaut, as she is depicted for us in the pages of that admirably written book. Nowhere has M. Feuillet displayed more signally his sagacity and acuteness in observing social phenomena, or his singular psychological skill. I know not whether to admire more his refinement or his audacity, his mastery of the emotions or his descriptive power. Certain it is that the morality of the world, in the long run, is determined by women. Certain it is that the philosopher was well warranted when he wrote "ce qu'on appelle l'homme moral, est formé sur les genoux de sa mère." Certain it is that for woman the idea of duty is, as a matter of fact, inseparably bound up with the spiritual conceptions

derived by her from religion. And as certain is it that if she once lose those conceptions, nothing but lack of personal attractions, or absence of opportunity, saves her from utter ethical degradation. Let us never forget that the difference between man and woman is not merely of physical conformation. It is psychical. "Woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse." She is governed far more by instinct, by impulse, by affections, than by reason, by purpose, by principles. For her, Materialism means more utter ruin than for man, for it extinguishes the ideal which is her one light of life. As it destroys the sense of duty in man, so is it fatal to pure love in woman. Bring up woman in the Positivist school, and you make of her a monster: the very type of ruthless cynicism, of all-engrossing selfishness, of unbridled passion.

There are eminent persons, I am well aware, to whom these conclusions will be extremely distasteful. Writers, whose names alone suffice to establish a claim upon our respectful attention, discourse to us of what they call "independent morality:" by which they mean morality deprived of its metaphysical basis. Professor Huxley, as I remember, somewhere protests, with characteristic vehemence, "I do not for one moment admit that morality is not strong enough to hold its own." After all, however, the vital question is not what this accom-

plished physicist will admit, but what, as a matter of fact, does happen, and, from the nature of the case, must happen. No doubt Professor Huxley, emancipated from belief in angel or spirit, still guides himself by the same ethical rules as before. I do not myself know anything of the early history of this illustrious man. But I suppose that, like the rest of us, he was brought up upon the Catechism. At all events, I am quite sure that he is the product of many generations of Christian progenitors. What M. Renan happily calls the moral sap of the old belief—"la sève morale de la vieille croyance"—still courses through his spiritual being. His Materialism takes credit for virtues springing from quite another source: "Miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma." He knows, far better than I do, the influence of heredity and of environment upon character. He is well aware how deeply rooted in the past are those ethical principles whereby human life is still largely governed, even among Materialists. The question is, can you uproot those principles, and expect them to flourish upon a quite different soil? Morality, in Professor Huxley, I can well believe, is strong enough to hold its own. But will it be strong enough in Professor Huxley's great-grandchildren? "It takes several generations for Christian morality to get into the blood," the missionaries in Samoa told Baron von Hübner. It will doubtless take several generations for Christian morality to get out of the blood. And

then? Not, indeed, that I am now pleading for Christianity. Still less am I pleading for any special form of it. There is little in Christian morality that is exclusively Christian.* And I am not prepared to assert that many of the most precious of the ethical elements of our civilisation might not survive a general decay of specifically Christian doctrines. I am at present merely pointing to the fact, that as the metaphysical dogmas, enumerated in a previous page, have lost their hold upon the popular mind, the ethical conceptions for which they served as a basis have fallen into discredit. But Materialism proposes to rear for us a new Morality upon another foundation. Let us go on to examine that proposal.

* On this subject see pp. 115, 211, 244-5.

CHAPTER II.

MATERIALISTIC ETHICS.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY, in one of the most interesting of his *Lay Sermons*, has proclaimed to all mankind: "I say that natural knowledge, seeking to satisfy natural wants, has found the ideas which can alone still spiritual cravings. I say that natural knowledge, in desiring to ascertain the laws of comfort, has been driven to discover those of conduct, and to lay the foundations of a new morality." * "A new morality" based ultimately on "the laws of comfort!" Glad tidings of great joy, indeed, to a benighted nineteenth century. Similarly, Mr. Herbert Spencer assures us that "the establishment of the rules of right conduct upon a scientific basis is a pressing need." † And, to the like effect, a popular professor in the Paris School of Medicine recently prophesied: "By-and-by, when the rest of the world has risen to the intellectual level of France, and true views of the nature of existence are held by the bulk of mankind, now under clerical

* P. 14. † *Data of Ethics*, Pref. iv.

direction, the present crude and vulgar notions regarding morality, religion, divine providence, deity, the soul, and so forth, will be swept entirely away, and the dicta of science will remain the sole guides of sane and educated men. . . . . Churchmen and moral philosophers represent the old and dying world, and we, the men of science, represent the new." * Let us proceed to inquire what is the substitute for "the present crude and vulgar notions regarding morality" proposed to the world by "men of science," as physicists modestly call themselves, in disdainful ignorance of all sciences except their own.

Of course there is diversity of operation in these manufacturers of new ethics. But in all worketh one and the self-same spirit. They all aim at presenting the world with what they term "an independent morality," by which they mean a morality deduced merely from physical law, grounded solely on what they call "experience," and on analysis of and deductions from experience; holding only of the positive sciences and rejecting all pure reason, all philosophy in the true sense of the word. They all insist that there is no essential difference between the moral and the physical order; that the world of ideas is but a development

* Quoted by Professor Davis in his article, "The Moral Aspects of Vivisection," in the *North American Review* of March, 1885.

of the world of phenomena. They all agree in the negation of first and of final causes, of the soul and of free-will. Instead of finality, they tell us, necessity reigns; mechanical perhaps, or it may be dynamical, but issuing practically in the elimination of moral liberty as a useless spring in the machinery of matter. I venture to say that in the long run there are only two schools of ethics—the hedonistic and the transcendental. There are only two sides from which we can approach a question of right and wrong—the physical and the spiritual; there are only two possible foundations of morality—conscience and concupiscence; * the laws of universal reason, and what Professor Huxley calls "the laws of comfort." The "men of science" are agreed in anathematising the transcendental. Their method is purely physical. They conceive of man merely as "ein geniessendes Thier," an animal whose motive principle is what they call "happiness;" for whom, as Mr. Leslie Stephen roundly asserts, "pain and pleasure are the determining causes of action"—nay more, "the sole and the ultimate causes." † Such are the foundations of the new "independent morality." We will now follow it out in some of its details.

And first let us learn of a teacher concerning

* I use the word in its proper philosophical sense: "a certain power and motion of the mind, whereby men are driven to desire pleasant things which they do not possess."

† *Science of Ethics*, p. 50.

whom a well-informed writer recently testified that "in this country and America he is *the* philosopher," and whose works, if less implicitly received as oracles in France and Germany, have done much to shape and colour current speculation in those countries. I need hardly say that I speak of Mr. Herbert Spencer. I shall devote my next chapter to examining, in some detail, the moral philosophy of this popular writer. Here, I will merely observe that the doctrine unfolded by him, at such great length, appears to me to amount, in the last resort, to this: All the actions of society are determined by the actions of the individual; all the actions of the individual are regulated by the laws of life; and all the laws of life are purely physical. Turn we to another eminent teacher, hardly less influential. Consider the following account of human nature which Professor Huxley sets before us in his *Lay Sermons*, enforcing it by an epigram of Goethe: "All the multifarious and complicated activities of men" —*all*, remember, without exception—"are comprehensible under three categories. Either they are immediately directed towards the maintenance and development of the body, or they effect transitory changes in the relative positions of parts of the body, or they tend towards the continuance of the species. Even those manifestations of intellect, of feeling, and of will, which we rightly name the higher faculties, are not excluded from this classification, inasmuch as to every one but the subject

of them they are known only as transitory changes in the relative positions of parts of the body. Speech, gesture, and every other form of human action are, in the long run, resolvable into muscular contraction." * I do not overlook the words "to every one but the subject of them." And most certainly I have no desire to force upon Mr. Huxley's language a meaning which it does not logically convey. But surely he will agree with me, that knowledge which is confined to one's inner consciousness, and can never become the property of another, cannot have much effect upon society at large. It may be dismissed by any philosopher aiming at the practical; and that, unquestionably, is Professor Huxley's aim. A man, dwelling in the depths of his own consciousness, he tells us, may think, if he pleases, in terms of spirit. But the moment that man attempts to influence another, he must put away everything that is not muscular contraction. "Weiter bringt es kein Mensch," says the incomparable genius who, in three lines, reduces human life to an affair of feeding oneself, begetting children, and doing one's best to feed them. I know it may be answered, "Well, but the professor leaves us the unknown and unknowable subject, beyond the limits of consciousness, as of physical science." What of that? Pray, what has morality to do with the unknown and unknowable? "Nihil volitum quin præcognitum" is

* P. 135.

indeed a medieval axiom, and so, as I fear, may be "suspect" to Professor Huxley. But although medieval, it is unquestionably true. On morality, the unknown and unknowable can have only a nominal influence. The real influence is left to the teaching which sees in the exercise of our highest faculties only "muscular contraction." Public morality must be founded on publicly acknowledged facts. It cannot depend upon a subjective consciousness unable to manifest itself intellectually. Professor Huxley, like Mr. Spencer, really treats ethics as a branch of physics.

And this is in truth the doctrine—whether explicitly avowed or not—of the whole Positivist and experimental school. Further, right, they will have it, is not absolute but relative, a matter of experience and calculation; it is nothing but the accord of the individual instinct with the social instinct; the momentary harmony of the need manifested in me, and of the exigences of the species to which I belong. In like manner wrong is the absence of such accord, the want of such harmony; "a natural phenomenon like any other, but a phenomenon that at a given moment is found to be in opposition to the eventual good of the race." And this agrees with Bentham's doctrine that what we call a crime is really a miscalculation, an error in arithmetic. General utility, the good of the species is, then, the only scientific and experimental criterion of human action, the sole rule of right and

wrong; and morality consists in the apprehension of that principle, and in conformity with it. And so Mr. John Morley, whom many take for a philosopher, in his book on *Compromise*, dogmatically affirms, "Moral principles, when they are true, are, at bottom, only registered generalisations from experience. Human society, in the view of this authority, is not an organism but a machine—just as the individual men of whom it is composed are machines;* a kind of company, as some one has happily expressed it, which insures against risks by applying the principles of solidarity and reciprocity, the taxes being the premium.

Society then, and its supposed interests, being the one rule of right and wrong, it is idle to talk of any natural rights of man. We are taught, in terms, that "the *only* reason for recognising *any* supposed right or claim inherent in any man or body of men, other than what is expressly conferred by positive law, ever has been and still is, general utility," and we are referred to "Bentham, Austin, and Mill" as having "conclusively settled that." We are assured that "a natural right is a mere figment of the imagination," or, what is apparently regarded as more heinous still, "a metaphysical entity." Do we suggest that slavery, for example, is, as the *Institutes* teach, *contra naturam*, a violation of a man's natural right

* "The good man is a machine whose springs are adapted so to fulfil their functions as to produce beneficent results." Morley's *Diderot*, vol. ii. p. 182.

to freedom? No, we are told; the true objection to slavery is that it is opposed to the good of the community. Lord Sherbrooke, some years ago, affirmed that the principle of abstract right had never been admitted in England; a statement which implies, at the least, deficiency of information or shortness of memory. "If it is the sound English doctrine," observed Mr. Matthew Arnold, by way of comment on this text, "that all rights are created by law, and are based on expediency, and are alterable as the public advantage may require, certainly that orthodox doctrine is mine." *All* rights created by law! Well, well, it was always a pity when Mr. Matthew Arnold laid aside his garland and singing robes, and dallied with philosophy. But such an accomplished scholar might have remembered that the doctrine of which he thus made solemn profession, is precisely the doctrine of the ancient sophists, so admirably refuted by Plato. Besides, he surely possessed some acquaintance with the language and literature of Germany. And the knowledge that the idea of *Naturrecht* is the very foundation of scientific jurisprudence in that country, might have served to make him pause. However, there can be no question that the apostle of culture is here the mouthpiece of the vulgar belief, that material power, the force of numbers, furnishes the last reason of things, and the sole organ of justice; a belief which finds practical expression in the political dogma that any "damnéd error" becomes

right, if a numerical majority of the male adult inhabitants in any country can be induced, by rhetoric and rigmarole, to bless it and approve it with their votes.

And as, in the new morality, right springs from the physical fact of living together, so duty springs from the physical necessity of living together. The old conception of conscience as "a participation of the Eternal Law in the rational creature," the inward witness of the Supreme Judge, "a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas," is put aside as outworn rhetoric. The moral sense, we are assured, is not primitive, not innate, but a mere empirical fact, transformed and established by heredity; a "phenomenon" (so they call it) variable and varying with the exigencies of the race. The primary fount of morality, M. Littré has discovered—I believe the glory of the discovery belongs to him—is in the contest between egoism, the starting-point of which is nutrition, and altruism, the starting-point of which is sexuality. In these organic needs he finds the origin of justice. It is a merely physiological fact,* the highest degree of the social instinct, the expression of a multitude of sensations, images, ideas, springing successively from various circumstances, in many generations, and welded together, so to speak, in the brain, by

* Elsewhere he allows justice to be "an irreducible psychical fact." I suppose "irreducible" means ultimate.

the force of habit, the invention and use of language, and the action of time. Thus there arises a tradition, which becomes the public opinion of the community, giving birth to "those uniformities of approbation and disapprobation"—the phrase, I think, is is Dr. Bain's—which encourage and, so to speak, consecrate such and such conduct as tending to the general good; or, in other words, as likely to result in the largest number of pleasant sensations for the largest number of people. And so the test of the moral value of an action is not the intention of the doer, but the result of the deed: the true criterion of its ethical value is its pleasurable tendency: show that which is commonly accounted virtue is not conducive to human gratification, and it ceases to be virtuous. In the new ethics the maxim so often and so ignorantly cited to the reproach of the Society of Jesus, that "the end justifies the means,"* finds place in all its naked-

* It may not be amiss to point out that this maxim, in the sense popularly put upon it, has never been held by any school of casuists, Jesuit or other. The commonplaces of moral theology, *Licitus est finis, etiam licita sunt media* and *Cui licitus est finis, licita sunt media*, merely assert the general philosophical principle, that if the end, the complete *opus*, is a good one, due means may be taken for its attainment: not all, nor any means, but first innocent means, and secondly means which are not, at all events, essentially evil, and which the end, and the end alone, can justify. Examples of this second class are afforded by dangerous surgical operations, such as tracheotomy, lithotomy, amputation. The end of saving life justifies these means. But neither that end, nor any other, would justify adultery or blasphemy.

ness, as a very cardinal doctrine. It gives rise in practice to some curious applications, as when Mr. Cotter Morison, in his last work, exalts "the barren prostitute" at the expense of "the prolific spouse."

But, in truth, intention must be beside the question in the new morality, for, as I pointed out in the last chapter, its professors, one and all, repudiate free will, as in manifest contradiction with the law of mechanical causality. Through their identification of moral necessity with physical necessity, they are inevitably led to Determinism. "The doctrine that the will is free" is "virtually unmeaning," * Mr. John Morley tells us. And with the quiet contempt of one who is most ignorant of what he's most assured, he opposes to those fatuous persons who hold it, "sensible people who accept" what he calls "the scientific account of human action." That account is that every act is really the outcome of universal necessity; that free will is merely a name by which we veil our ignorance of causes, an illusion properly explained by Mr. Spencer, as the result of a vast collection of detailed associations whereof the history has been lost. Do we hint a doubt that this doctrine degrades man by reducing him to a machine? Mr. Morley loftily admonishes us that we are "using a kind of language that was invented in ignorance of what constitutes the true dignity of man." "What is nature

* *Miscellanies*, vol. i. p. 146.

itself," he inquires, "but a vast machine, in which our human species is no more than one weak spring?"

Now what are we to say of this new morality? I take leave to say that it is not moral at all. *Pace* Professor Huxley, I venture to assert that you can derive no ethical principle whatever from "the laws of comfort;" that from needs, personal or racial, from the interests, whether of the individual or of the community, you cannot extract an atom of morality. Mr. Lecky has justly remarked that the only charge utilitarians can bring against vice is that of imprudence. But, even supposing that the charge could be sustained, prudence is one thing, duty is quite another. Prudence rests upon the calculations of self-love. Duty means abnegation of self and obedience to the unconditioned command of Right. The first note of the moral law, as of all law, is obligation. To sacrifice my private gratification to the general welfare, may be an admirable rule if it comes to me in the name of Right. Not so if it appeals to me in the name of Utility. I ask what is useful for myself, for my own delectation. Why should I not, if man is merely a pleasurable animal? Do not mistake me. I grant that pleasure is a mighty spring of individual life. I admit that it is a good at which the human will may legitimately aim. But I deny that it is the source of ethics. The only morality you can derive from it is the morality of money, for which pleasures, physical and in-

tellectual, of all kinds, may be purchased: *divina humanaque pulchris divitiis parent.* "Pleasure and pain govern the world," Bentham tells us. "It is for these two sovereign masters alone," he insists, "to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do."* Well, but surely, the pleasure and pain which come home to the individual, are his individual pleasure and pain. The idea of Duty differs by the whole diameter of existence from the idea of Delectation.

But they tell us "Our sole experimental and scientific criterion of human action—the greatest happiness of the greatest number—does carry with it an obligation. The precept really is: Work for the general advantage, for you will find your own advantage in doing so."† To this I

* *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, c. 1.

† Such is the Utilitarian doctrine as expounded by Mr. John Stuart Mill, whom, I suppose, we must regard as its chief apostle in our time. Mr. Herbert Spencer tells us that the true moral motive is constituted by representations of consequences naturally produced by the acts: which representations are partly due to experience of the results of like acts in the life of the individual, and partly to the inherited effect of such experiences in progenitors. Thus the moral deterrent from adultery is to be found in the "ideas of unhappiness entailed on the aggrieved wife or husband, the damaged lives of children, and the different mischiefs which go along with disregard of the marriage tie." *Data of Ethics*, § 45. But Mr. Spencer quite fails to demonstrate why the possibility that disagreeable feeling may result to others from the adulterous act, should lead the enamoured pair to forego the extremely agreeable feeling which it will certainly bring to themselves. As I shall show, at length, in the next chapter, obligation has no place in Mr. Spencer's ethics; nor on his principles can any valid reason be given why the individual is ever bound to sacrifice himself.

reply, first, Where is the obligation, the binding tie? In place of it you present me with nothing but a mere motive. And, in the second place, I observe, that the proposition on which that motive is based, is untenable. It is by no means universally true that in working for the general advantage I shall find my own. On the contrary, upon many occasions, the general advantage points one way, and my private advantage another. Nay, is it too much to say that my own private and personal advantage will seldom be identical with the general advantage, in a world where the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest are primary laws? Let us look at the old precept, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," in the light of the new morality. I exhibit that injunction to a young man burning with a passion for a married woman. He replies, reasonably enough, "Why should I not commit adultery?" "Because it is for the general interest, which is, in truth, your own interest, that you should not. Don't you see, some day, when you marry, if you ever do marry, some one may commit adultery with your wife." "May! yes; I will run that risk. Meanwhile I shall enjoy the supreme pleasure of gratifying the strongest desire which I have ever experienced." The answer seems to me conclusive. The general advantage is an abstraction which concerns only the abstraction called humanity. If delectation, pleasure, happiness, is the criterion of action, it is pretty certain to mean in

practice our own individual delectation, pleasure, happiness. If agreeable feeling be the sanction of ethics, be assured an immediate and certain agreeable feeling will be found a stronger sanction than a future and contingent agreeable feeling.

The truth is that in mere physics there is no room for the idea of right. And the reason is—that the mechanical view of the universe offers no spiritual ground of existence, that out of it no true individual can "emerge." No one that I know of, with the exception of Mr. John Morley, praises or blames a machine. It is only in the spiritual sphere that an ethical principle can be found. In a world of mechanism, right is a meaningless word, for it has neither object nor subject. View human life from the merely physical side, and force takes the place of right. The strongest are the best. They survive; they prove their goodness by surviving. And further than this the experimental sciences cannot bring us.

Physical laws give us mere facts. And the authority of a mere fact, I say, is its material force. In any system of morals based on physics, force is, in the long run, the only criterion of right and wrong: the sole reason for respecting the person or property of another, is that he can compel respect for it. You can no more extract morality from physical facts, than sunbeams from cucumbers —perhaps less. But do we not speak of respecting facts? True. But the word respect here means

only recognition; it implies no element of moral judgment. "Let us not fight against facts," says Euripides, "for we can do them no harm." We recognise, as prudent men, their character of necessity. And so we shape them to our ends. Far otherwise is it with the moral law. We discern in it not something that we can make serve us, but something which we must serve. It humiliates, it commands us; our respect for it is religious. There is a whole universe between mechanical necessity and ethical necessity. Physical law says, "Given such and such antecedents, and such and such consequences follow." Moral law says, "In such circumstances, such action *ought* to follow." Physical law declares, "This is how things are." Moral law declares, "This is how things *ought* to be." You cannot get that *ought* from an universe of observed facts, from an infinite series of experiences. "The word 'ought'," Kant observes, in a well-known passage of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, "expresses a species of necessity which nature does not and cannot present to the mind of man. The understanding knows nothing in nature but that which is, or has been, or will be. It would be absurd to say that anything in nature ought to be other than it is, in the relations in which it stands. Indeed, the word 'ought,' when we consider merely the course of nature, has neither application nor meaning. . . . . Whatever number of motives nature may present to my will, whatever sensuous

impulses, it is beyond their power to pronounce the word 'ought.'" No. It belongs to another order. A fact is isolated and contingent. But the distinctive note of a moral principle is universal necessity, the inconceivability of the contrary. What commands my respect for another's claim is not the amount of brute force with which he can back it, but its justice. More, a primary note of justice is respect for weakness.

"Nay, nay," it may be answered, "you forget the long education of public opinion. Do not its 'uniformities of approbation or disapprobation' furnish a sufficient account of morality?" No; they do not. It is not that I undervalue the ethical traditions which lie at the root of national character. So far as public opinion represents those traditions, it is a force of indubitable value for good. And so far it is an effect, not a cause. It is in no sense the creative principle of morality. Not majorities but minorities—usually very small minorities—are the "helpers and friends of mankind" on the path of ethical progress. How, in the absence of a perpetual miracle—which Dr. Bain, I suppose, does not postulate—how should it be otherwise, when we consider the units of which the majority is composed? Surely Goethe was not altogether unfounded when he said, "Nothing is more abhorrent to a reasonable man than an appeal to a majority, for it consists of a few strong men who lead, of knaves who temporise, of the feeble who

are hangers on, and of the multitude who follow without the slightest idea of what they want." As a matter of fact, the highest moral acts which the world has witnessed, have been performed in the very teeth of an uniformity of social disapprobation. A primary token of greatness in public life is to be absolutely unswayed by the "ardor civium prava jubentium." And pravity it is, as often as not, for which they clamour. Did Socrates, did Jesus Christ, found themselves upon the public opinion of the communities in which they lived? What a source for the motive or the sanction of the moral law! But more; as I pointed out just now, the theories of Naturalism, one and all of them, held by the prophets of the new ethics, involve Determinism. The attempt to apply the laws of natural history to social relations issues, logically and inevitably, in the doctrine of complete moral irresponsibility. What rational meaning can the words right and wrong possess, if the human mind is nothing but a bundle of sensations, passively received and mechanically modified? Moral obligation presupposes, nay, postulates, a certain freedom of the will. It is a necessity addressed to free activities; not, of course, absolutely free, but relatively—free in the mysterious depths of consciousness to choose between motives. "Du kannst Mensch sein, weil du Mensch sein sollst."

Here, as I noted in the last chapter, is the only ground of merit and demerit, the only sufficient

justification of that penal legislation without which society could not hold together. Unless you admit free will and goodness in itself, absolute right and the possibility of choosing right, no reasonable theory of the criminal law is possible. View the malefactor merely in the light of physical science, and what you have to deal with is not a free agent responsible for the evil he has done, because he knew the wrong and might have refrained, but a temperament dominated by irresistible impulses, a machine urged to the fatal deed by cerebral reaction. If the murderer merely obeyed physiological fatality in slaying his victim, it is monstrous to punish him. Where there is no responsibility there is no guilt. "But his execution will deter others." Deter others! Is that a sufficient reason for hanging an innocent person? "But any punishment short of death, at all events, may be remedial." How remedial, if Determinism is true? *Velle non discitur*. Such is the working of the new morality in the sphere of criminal jurisprudence. Its influence throughout the whole of the public order cannot help being equally monstrous. It saps the idea of responsibility in individual consciences. Its cardinal principle is supplied by the maxim of Helvétius, taken in all its nudity and crudity, "Tout devient légitime pour le salut publique." The maxim is absolutely unèthical. It makes of justice, in Plato's phrase, merely "the interest of the stronger." "To do a great right, do a little wrong." No; "it

may not be." The only ethical principle is, that

> "——because right is right, to follow right
> Were wisdom, in the scorn of consequence."

Consequence! It is beside the question. "Better were it," says Cardinal Newman, "for sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions who are upon it to die of starvation in extremest agony, so far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul should tell one willful untruth, though it harmed no one, or steal one poor farthing without excuse."* This is the language of the theologian. But the philosopher gives a like judgment. "The dictum, 'All's well that ends well,'" Kant happily observes, "has no place in morals." And morals have no real place in any philosophy which bases itself on the doctrines of utilitarianism. No act can be obligatory, in the proper sense, unless it is binding upon us, without regard to its consequences, and without reference to any personal end. Morality is nothing if not absolute. It is nothing but a mere regulation of police in any system of philosophy, falsely so called, based solely upon the physical sciences, which are essentially relative.

Certain it is that there is no school of Materialists who so much as profess to care for duty, for its own sake. They regard it as a mere means to delectation. Thus, they tell us that, for the future, the highest virtues must spring from sympathy.

* *Anglican Difficulties*, Lec. viii. § 4.

Do we ask, Why? "Sympathy," they confidently maintain, "will impel us to seek the agreeable consciousness that results from the healthy exercise of the energies of our nature, and to promote it in others by the practice of virtue and benevolence." "A deep and intelligent sympathy with the race" is to supply the place of the old sanctions. I pity the race. There is no conceivable motive why we should trouble ourselves about the welfare of others if they are mere automatic organisms. The "agreeable consciousness that results from the healthy exercise of the energies of our nature" is grotesquely inadequate to support the old rule of right action: "Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra." Physical science is utterly unable to supply any reason why we should "prefer a noble life before a long." If ever M. Renan, who is of the house and lineage of Balaam, the son of Beor, said a true word, it is this: "L'intérêt personnel n'inspire que la lâcheté." It is an insult to my understanding to tell me that selfishness, however sublimated, can yield the same fruits as self-sacrifice; that from natural history, from physiology, from chemistry, you can derive the elements of moral force. Justice, duty, love, can be rooted and grounded only in the Absolute and Eternal. They are the idlest of words, if no echo come back to them from beyond the grave. "Virtue will never cease to be admirable so long as man is man," a Teutonic Materialist urges. I entirely

agree. But the human mammal emptied of Personality, Freewill, Moral Responsibility, is no longer man. "He had him from me Christian, and look, if the fat villain have not transformed him ape." And then, assuredly, virtue ceases to be admirable to him. "Independent morality." Yes. I quite allow that, in a sense, morality is independent. It is independent of all systems, religious and metaphysical; of all facts, physiological or historical. In this sense it is independent. But it is not independent of personality. How can we attribute ethical qualities to a *thing?* I maintain that whether morality be regarded subjectively or objectively, Materialism is fatal to it. Only a *person* is capable of a moral act. And Materialism effaces personality. Let Materialism banish from the world the old spiritual dogmas on which ethics have hitherto rested, and the sombre picture, drawn by the great poet of the last century, will assuredly be realised:

> "Religion, blushing, veils her sacred fires,
> And, unawares, Morality expires:
> Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
> Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine."

It may be said that consequences are the scarecrows of fools; that things are what they are, and that it is our wisdom to see them as they are; that their consequences will be what they will be,

and can in no way alter the facts of which they are the outcome. This is true enough, but it is not the whole truth. Consequences assuredly do deserve our attention. We must reject them, decisively, as a criterion of morality. We are bound to admit them as an element in ratiocination. A *reductio ad absurdum* is a good logical process. Why? Because man consists in reason. And so the fact, that the doctrines of Materialism issue in unreason, in that "universal darkness" of which Pope prophesied, is enough to discredit them. If they are true, the last word of philosophy is spoken in the verse of Baudelaire, "Resigne-toi, mon âme, dors ton sommeil de brûte." But to tell me that this is the conclusion of the whole matter, is in flat contradiction to my deepest and most assured certitudes. Certain to me is the reasonableness of the universe. It is cosmos, not chaos. Be its final cause immeasurably distant from our knowledge, yet every part of the process through which it moves is found, when examined, to be intelligible. "Nothing is that errs from law." There are mysteries, indeed, and locked doors, everywhere. As Hegel saw, every convex is concave, and every concave convex. But this is not contradiction nor unreason. Certain also to me is the supremacy of duty. Whatever is doubtful, of this I am ineffably sure, that right I must do, whatever the result; that on the side of right I must be, whether it triumph or not. And as certain to me is the

sacredness of love. I do not speak of those *amours de chair* at which we glanced, in the last chapter, with the French novelist; but of that passion for the ideal, which is the light of life:

> "Luce intellettual, piena d'amore,
> Amor di vero ben pien di letizia,
> Letizia che trascende ogni dolzore."

But that which in my heart is love, in my conscience justice, in my intellect reason, is one and the same thing; it is the primary truth of which my whole moral being is full; and any doctrine which contradicts it is condemned already, even if it were, apparently, as well established, as Materialism is, manifestly, ill established. For, in truth, all schools of Materialists are confronted with the initial difficulties of the unity of consciousness, of the individuality and permanency of the Ego. These facts, however complex and obscure—and I fully recognise their complexity and obscurity—are the stumbling-stone of every school of Materialists, just as they are the adamantine foundation of all spiritual philosophy. And the writer who seeks to explain them away, who asks me to believe, upon his *ipse dixit*, that consciousness is a mere fortuitous result of mechanism, that thought is a mere cerebral secretion, that the Ego is a mere sensation, is a dogmatist who makes far greater demands upon my faith than any medieval hagiologist or Talmudic commentator. I know not any article of any creed, which so largely taxes my

credulity, as does the proposition that there can be consciousness without personality, memory without identity, duty without liberty.

No sort of compromise, no kind of *modus vivendi*, appears to me possible between the two schools of Transcendentalism and Materialism. I admit indeed that we may learn much from many teachers, whose theories I judge most false. Let us gladly accept their facts. Let us also narrowly scrutinise their arguments. The writers whom I have in view, however admirable in other respects, are assuredly great corrupters of words. Too often they exhibit the smallest power of distinguishing between a nude hypothesis and a proved conclusion. They omit necessary links in their reasoning, as when, for example, they pass at a bound over the unbridged gulf between automatic consciousness and deliberate volition. They tell us, perhaps not quite accurately, that the brain is the organ of thought,* and then they proceed to argue as though they had demonstrated that it is the cause of thought, and that intellect is a mere "cerebral phenomenon." They talk glibly of causation, as if they knew all about it, overlooking their entire inability to analyse the causal nexus. And what shall we say of the way in which they

* I should prefer saying that the brain is the organ, not of thought, but of the *phantasmata* which furnish thought with materials: it is the organ of imagination, in the highest sense.

habitually employ the term law? It really means, in physics, no more than "an observed uniformity of sequence or coexistence." But they give it a sort of personification, and speak of it as a cause. They confound it with necessity, forgetting that there is all the difference in the world between invariable regularity and necessary regularity. I confess that I often put down the pompous pages of some of the most famous of them and say to myself—yielding, perhaps, too readily, to a professional instinct—"If only I could have you under cross-examination for half an hour! How easy it would be to turn you inside out, to show what a mass of arbitrary assumption, of confused ratiocination, of audacious sophism, all this brilliant rhetoric is!"

But let us remember that philosophy is the science of principles, and so ought to be encyclical, encyclopædic. It must no more neglect the exact sciences than the moral. "A wider metaphysic would not harm our physic" is an abundantly true warning. Equally true is it, that a wider physic would not harm our metaphysic. It fills me with amazement to see the arguments still resorted to by men, learned in a fashion, and full of goodwill, but quite unacquainted with the true bearings of the problems which agitate the modern mind, nay, totally devoid of the intellectual training necessary in order so much as to appreciate them. Their blindness to the signs of the times is well-nigh

miraculous. They do not seem to possess even that sensitive membrane which, Darwin tells us, is the beginning of the eye. Who, that is at all competent to judge, can deny that the progress of the sciences, during the present century, has largely revolutionised the world of thought, or doubt that many old questions assume quite a new aspect in the light now shed upon them? To take one instance only, Transcendentalism is by no means bound up with those dualistic conceptions, which posit matter and mind as two incomprehensibly related substances, eternally alien from each other, and irreconcilably hostile. For myself, every day that I live, I become more confirmed in the belief which I expressed some years ago, that "the old wall of partition between spirit and matter is cracking in all directions," that "we shall come to recognise a thinking substance, of which thought is the foundation, not the resultant."* Even now—in words which I gladly borrow from Mr. Romanes—may we not regard "any sequence of natural causation as the merely phenomenal aspect of the ontological reality, the outward manifestation of an

* See *Ancient Religion and Modern Thought*, pp. 340-345. This view was practically admitted in the old scholastic philosophy, when the potentiality of so-called matter to put on fresh qualities was allowed, though but slightly analysed. It is the teaching of the Angelic Doctor that matter, *materia prima*, is not a substance, cannot exist by itself, is pœne nihil, and is susceptible of endless transformations, all of which are due to higher and immaterial energies.

inward meaning?" The reality is spiritual, the phenomenon merely the shadow and the symbol. Materialism, like all errors, is but the distortion of a truth. It is a false expression of that tendency to unity which is so marked a characteristic of the modern mind, and which is not false. A century ago Lessing pronounced ἓν καὶ πᾶν the last word of philosophy. Whatever exception may be taken to the formula, assuredly, it adumbrates a great verity. And as assuredly none can be farther removed from the apprehension of that verity, than those who, like Diderot, discern in the universe nothing but "one and the same phenomenon indefinitely diversified." Enveloped as we are, according to the profound doctrine of the old Vedic sages, in the veil of Mâya, what grosser illusion can there be than to mistake the fleeting shows apprehensible by our senses for the Self-Existent? "Of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things." Most near and most hidden, all phenomena consist by Him, all phenomena point to Him, His indwelling leads us to His transcendence. "Wer darf ihn nennen?"—"Who dare name Him?"—the poet asks.* And the question may well seem reverent, when we think how men talk of the Absolute and Eternal as if He were altogether such an one as themselves, as if He were

* Compare St. Augustine, Quid dicit aliquis, cum de Te dicit? Et væ tacentibus de Te; quoniam loquaces muti sunt. *Confes.* l. i. c. 4.

the man in the next room. Let us celebrate that higher ignorance, that *docta ignorantia*, as the mystics speak, which is the last word alike of physics, of philosophy, of religion. "Deveni in altitudinem maris et silui."

CHAPTER III.

EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS.

It is not very easy to over-estimate the extent to which the modern mind has been stirred by the doctrines popularly associated with the name of Charles Darwin. There is no department of human thought, no sphere of human life, in which the influence of what is called the evolutionary philosophy is not felt. I say advisedly, "what is called"; for evolution really exhibits the mode, not the cause, of development, and its ascertained facts lend themselves to various interpretations. When, however, the evolutionary philosophy is spoken of, the hypothesis of the universe so elaborately formulated by Mr. Herbert Spencer is usually meant. It is that hypothesis which Professor Huxley has blessed and approved as the "only complete and methodical exposition of the theory of evolution" known to him, "a work that should be carefully studied by those who desire to become acquainted with the tendencies of scientific thought." This seems to be fair enough. No one can deny to Mr. Spencer the

praise of method, or, in a certain sense, of completeness; and unquestionably he does exhibit clearly the tendencies of an influential school of contemporary physicists. I do not doubt that all future theories of the universe will have to reckon with the facts so industriously collected by Mr. Spencer, and with the speculations into which he has so ingeniously fitted them. But I do take leave to doubt whether the exposition of the doctrine of evolution, which we owe to him, will ultimately be accepted as the true one. It appears to me too narrow, too superficial, too mechanical, too inadequate to life. Its completeness is attained by disregarding fundamental principles, both of metaphysics and of logic. And, notwithstanding its parade of physical science, it is not really founded upon experience at all. At present, however, it is unquestionably a potent factor in the world's thought.

My purpose here is not to examine Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy as a whole. I am now concerned with only one department of it, the ethical. It seems worth while, in view of the wide influence, both direct and indirect, exercised by Mr. Spencer's writings, to devote a chapter to the evolutionary morality of which he is the prophet. To this part of his system, as appears from the introduction to his *Data of Ethics*, he attaches peculiar importance. His disciples are wont to glorify it as

the crowning achievement of their master's philosophy. And, assuredly, it is the most noteworthy endeavour known to me, to establish the rules of right conduct upon a new basis. That basis Mr. Spencer calls "scientific." He shall himself explain what he means by the adjective. "The consideration of the moral phenomena, as phenomena of evolution," he writes, is "forced" upon us, because "they form a part of the aggregate of phenomena which evolution has wrought out. If the entire physical universe has been evolved—if the solar system, as a whole, the earth, as a part of it, the life, in general, which the earth bears, as well as that of each individual organism—if the mental phenomena displayed by all creatures up to the highest, in common with the phenomena presented by aggregates of these highest—if one and all conform to the laws of evolution; then the necessary implication is that those phenomena of conduct, in the highest creatures, with which morality is concerned, also conform."* But these "laws of evolution" are considered by Mr. Spencer as purely physical. He expressly tells us that "a redistribution of matter and motion *constitutes* evolution."† "The deepest truths we can reach"—in morals, as elsewhere—are, he assures us, "simply statements of the widest uniformities in our experience of the relations of Matter, Motion and Force."‡

* *Data of Ethics*, § 23.
† *Ibid.* § 29. The italics are mine.
‡ *First Principles*, § 194.

Such, according to Mr. Spencer, is the evolutionary method in moral philosophy. It is a purely physical method. I said in my last chapter: "In the long run there are only two schools of ethics, the hedonistic and the transcendental; only two possible foundations of morality, conscience and concupiscence." There can be no doubt to which of these schools Mr. Spencer belongs; upon which of these foundations he builds. Unquestionably he must be reckoned with those "men of science" who derive morality "from physical law, grounded solely on what they call experience, and on analysis of and deductions from experience;" who "insist that there is no essential difference between the moral and the physical order; who agree in the negation of primary and final causes, of the soul and of freewill; who eliminate moral liberty as a useless spring in the machinery of matter; who conceive of man as an animal whose motive principle is what they call happiness." Experience and expediency—to these principles in the domain of knowledge and of action, they reduce all philosophy and all morality. And so does Mr. Spencer.

But I may at once be met with the objection, "You are going in the teeth of Mr. Spencer's repeated declaration that he adopts neither experience nor expediency as his foundation. Has he not severely criticised Bentham and the axiom, 'The greatest happiness of the greatest number' in his *Social Statics*, and in *The Data of Ethics?* Has

he not, with equal vigour, assailed the doctrine of experience upheld by Mill, substituting for it another in which tribal considerations take the place of individual instincts? You must not interpret a writer against his own expressly intended meaning." To this I reply, It is quite true that Mr. Spencer is neither a Benthamist nor an adherent of Mr. Mill's association-philosophy. True, likewise, is it that he does not confine himself to the experience of the individual, or adopt the bald empiricism which sums up morality as enlightened self-interest. But it is none the less true, first, that he dissents utterly from the transcendental school as to the foundation of ethics; secondly, that he denies free-will in every possible sense, and subordinates morality to the laws of life, which laws he accounts of as purely physical; and thirdly, that he resolves right conduct into the pursuit of happiness or pleasure. To experience and expediency he comes at last, be the process ever so complicated. That fact all his dexterity in evolving laws of conduct from tribal selfishness cannot conceal, and will not abolish. It matters nothing whether his point of departure is the race or the individual. Morality so conceived, I contend, whether in the race or in the individual, is not morality at all, but something else; the principle upon which Mr. Spencer builds, when stripped of its disguises, is not conscience but concupiscence. To call him a particular Hedonist would be unjust. He is an universal Hedonist, or say "a rational Utili-

tarian," if you will: and in that capacity he is as liable to the objections urged in my last chapter, as are Bentham, Mill, and Littré, as are Dr. Bain and Professor Huxley.

I shall turn to Mr. Spencer's own works for the evidence upon which I rest these three counts of my indictment. The following well-known and extremely significant words are alone sufficient to establish the first: "There have been, and still are, developing in the race certain fundamental moral intuitions, and though these moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of Utility, gradually organised and inherited, they have come to be quite independent of conscious experience. Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space possessed by any living individual to have arisen from organised and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed to him their slowly developed nervous organisations—just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought apparently quite independent of experience; so do I believe that the experiences of utility organised and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of

moral intuition—certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility."* I am quite prepared to call this, as its author calls it, "rational utilitarianism." That it is not baldly empirical is, to speak technically, merely its *differentia* as a species of that genus, but cannot remove it into another genus altogether—the transcendental. Nor, indeed, would Mr. Spencer consent to our so removing it. On this point he is not in any way ambiguous. Of the transcendental doctrine he is the persistent opponent. Mr. Spencer entirely denies absolute ethics in the old sense. There *can* be no eternal principles of right and wrong, he insists. Why? Because we could attribute righteousness to the "power manifested through phenomena," only by supposing it capable of unrighteousness also. And "how can Unconditioned Being be subject to conditions beyond itself?"† How, indeed! Mr. Spencer is supposed, by his disciples, to be here displaying singular metaphysical acuteness. The truth is that he is really misled by his assumptions of the most arbitrary *à priori* description regarding the Ultimate Reality. His argument would be good only if, as the old sophists taught, "Man is the measure of all things." But he proceeds, "Right and wrong as conceived by us can exist only in relation to the actions of creatures capable of pleasures and pains; seeing that analysis carries us

* *Data of Ethics*, § 45. † *Ibid.* § 99.

back to pleasures and pains as the elements out of which the conceptions are framed."* Thus we arrive at an absolutely unmoral "nature of things," and the words right and wrong are seen to have only a subjective meaning, and only a mere momentary consequence in the evolution of being. Mr. Spencer's controversy with Bentham is not about the source of ethics. "I conceive it to be the business of Moral Science," he writes, "to deduce, from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness."† Bentham would quite agree, and so, by the way, would Professor Huxley, who, as we have seen, seeks the ultimate basis of morality "in the laws of comfort." But let us hear Mr. Spencer further. "Its deductions," he says of his own ethical science, "are to be recognised as laws of conduct; and are to be conformed to irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery." A *direct* estimation of happiness or misery. The adjective gives the measure of the difference between Mr. Spencer's doctrine and Bentham's. The difference is not essential. It relates to a mere matter of detail. For whether the estimation be direct or indirect, the things estimated are always happiness or misery; that is to say, as the last word proves conclusively, pains or pleasures. I, the individual, need not calculate, because, thanks to the laws of heredity, I have a ready-reckoner in

* *Data of Ethics*, § 99. † *Ibid.* § 21.

my brain. The tribe has been good enough to calculate for me, and all I am called upon to do is to read down the tables of figures. Those tables are "the laws of conduct." They may be such, on the utilitarian theory. They can be such on no other. What, indeed, are they save formulas of "utility, not as empirically estimated, but as rationally determined?" Mr. Spencer has proclaimed over and over again that reason is bounded by experience. His non-empiricism is only the tribal element contrasted with the individual. I claim to have shown, in my last chapter, that it is impossible to derive any rational criterion of right and wrong from either. Mr. Spencer's method in morals, as elsewhere, is, I repeat, purely physical, though he takes as his unit of force the race, and not any one member of it. With regard to this fundamental question of the source of ethics, he is divided from transcendental moralists by an impassable gulf.

And this brings me to my second point. I consider, as I stated in my last chapter, that the ethical imperative carries with it the idea and the fact of free volition. "Moral obligation," I wrote, "pre-supposes, nay postulates, a certain liberty of the will. It is a necessity addressed to free activities: not, of course, absolutely free, but relatively: free in the mysterious depths of consciousness to choose between motives. Du kannst Mensch sein,

weil du Mensch sein sollst." Now, that Mr. Spencer denies freewill, we all of course know. But it may be well to show, from his works, how sweeping this denial is, and what it involves. Consider, then, the following extracts from the *Principles of Psychology*. "Memory, Reason, and Feeling, simultaneously arise as the automatic actions become complex, infrequent, and hesitating; and Will, arising at the same time, is necessitated by the same conditions.* "When the automatic actions become so involved, so varied in kind, and severally so infrequent, as no longer to be performed with unhesitating precision—when after the reception of one of the more complex impressions, the appropriate motor changes become nascent, but are prevented from passing into immediate action by the antagonism of certain other nascent motor changes appropriate to some nearly allied impression; there is constituted a state of consciousness which, when it finally issues in action, displays what we term volition."† "That Will comes into existence through the increasing complexity and imperfect coherence of automatic actions, is clearly implied by the converse fact, that when the actions which were once incoherent and voluntary are very frequently repeated, they become coherent and involuntary."‡ "We have, therefore, a conflict between two sets of ideal"—Mr. Spencer means

* *Principles of Psychology*, § 217.

† *Ibid.* § 218. ‡ *Ibid.*

imagined—"motor changes which severally tend to become real, and one of which eventually does become real; and this passing of an ideal motor change into a real one, we distinguish as Will." * Hence he denies freedom of the will in set terms, and proceeds: "All actions whatever must be determined by those psychical connections which experience has generated, either in the life of the individual, or in that general antecedent life of which the accumulated results are organised in his constitution." † He then goes on to "briefly indicate," the nature of the current illusion. It simply "consists in supposing that at each moment the *ego* is something more than the aggregate of feelings and ideas, actual and nascent, which then exists." ‡ Thus it is that, "a man . . . . is led into the error of supposing that it was not the impulse alone which determined the action. . . . . Naturally enough . . . . he says that he wills the action since, psychically considered, he is, at that moment, nothing more than the composite state of consciousness by which the action is excited. But to say that the performance of the action is, therefore, the result of his freewill, is to say that he determines the cohesions of the psychical states which arouse the action; and as these psychical

* *Principles of Psychology*, § 218. It should not be forgotten that the words "ideal," "à priori," "necessary," and the like, are seldom used by Mr. Spencer in their proper metaphysical sense.

† *Ibid.* § 219. ‡ *Ibid.*

states constitute himself at that moment, that is to say that these psychical states determine their own cohesions, which is absurd. Their cohesions have been determined by experiences—the greater part of them constituting what we call his natural character, by the experiences of antecedent organisms; and the rest by his own experiences. The changes which at each moment take place in his consciousness, and among others those which he is said to will, are produced by this infinitude of previous experiences, registered in his nervous structure, co-operating with the immediate impressions on his senses."* We are told that we must not call Mr. Spencer a materialist. But crasser Materialism than this I have never met with in the course of my reading. At the same time it flatly contradicts the doctrine of the Unknowable, which in *First Principles* is said to do everything, and to be in all our acts, but which is certainly neither a registered experience, nor an impression on our senses. Mr. Spencer continues, "This subjective illusion in which the notion of freewill commonly originates, is strengthened by a corresponding objective illusion. The actions of other individuals . . . . appear to be under no necessity of following any particular order. But this seeming indeterminateness . . . . is consequent on the extreme complication of the forces in action.

* *Ibid.* I have been obliged to abridge, but I believe I have given fully the gist of Mr. Spencer's argument.

. . . . The effects are not calculable," but are really "as conformable to law as the simplest reflex actions. The irregularity and apparent freedom are inevitable results of the complexity, and"—I beg the reader's particular attention to this—"*equally arise in the organic world under parallel conditions.*"* To make it quite clear, Mr. Spencer illustrates† "the delusion of free-will" from the motion of a body acting under various attracting forces. Let us say the moon for instance. Man is quite as free therefore as the moon in his motions; neither more nor less. It is a most marvellous statement! Do we, in fact, ascribe freewill to a body whose motion is complex? Is that the reason why we consider other men possessed of it? But to go on with Mr. Spencer's argument. Here is the crown of it. "Psychical changes either conform to law or they do not. If they do not conform to law, this work, in common with all works on the subject, is sheer nonsense: no science of Psychology is possible. If they do conform to law, there cannot be any such thing as freewill." He adds yet this: "Freedom of the will would be at variance with the beneficent necessity displayed in the evolution of the cor-

* *Ibid.* The italics are mine.

† Mr. Kirkman in his *Philosophy without Assumptions* (pp. 214-223) has some exceedingly trenchant criticism on this passage. That work was published in 1876. I am not aware that Mr. Spencer has since corrected an illustration, justly described by Mr. Kirkman as "the most astonishing that ever decorated a book of science."

respondence between the organism and the environment." * Beneficent necessity! † Shall we reckon a few of its results? Not only fevers, cholera, black death, rattle-snakes, cobras and the tsetze fly, but—what is even more to our present purpose—all liars, thieves, murderers, whoremongers and adulterers: the Neros, Caligulas, Cartouches, Wainwrights of every age. Their actions were only a greater or less degree of "correspondence between the organism and the environment." "The answering phenomena" result "from the accumulation of experiences," and "would be hindered did there exist anything which otherwise caused their cohesions."‡ Rather than "hinder the cohesions" of a Borgia, of a Marquis de Sades, we must show that freewill is an objective and subjective delusion.

It is a tempting theme! But I must turn away from it to say one word on what I really am obliged to call Mr. Spencer's sophism about conformity to

* *Principles of Psychology*, § 220.

† "Beneficent necessity." But, as we have seen, Mr. Spencer teaches an absolutely unmoral "nature of things." Will he continue to preach beneficent necessity when he has told us that such beneficence implies no intention whatever of benefitting? Surely behind the dreary verbiage of optimism with which Mr. Spencer's volumes are replete, we may discern, if we have eyes, a creed of the blankest, blindest indifference, the eternally stupid Unknowable, not so far advanced as the much-despised Devil of popular Christianity, for that personage, at least, can interest himself in our damnation, whereas the Unknowable has not the wit even to do wrong, much less to be always devising it.

‡ *Ibid.*

law. What does Mr. Spencer mean by law? Evidently, in this place, that which *must* be: which necessarily comes to pass. But this is a begging of the question; for it is by no means clear that there may not be a free and deliberately chosen conformity to law, as all men who believe at once in morality and freewill, say there is. And again, the teaching of physical science as expounded, for example, by Professor Huxley, is that it knows nothing of necessity, but goes upon uniform experience. Here is one of the many dilemmas in which Mr. Spencer finds himself. Either he maintains a genuine intrinsic necessity, and for this he has no warrant from "science," or he maintains a counterfeit necessity, equal only to uniform experience in the past, and from this he will never, in good logic, obtain a necessity which overthrows freewill. The most regular conduct, in the ideally moral man, would still be free, and his acts voluntary.

I go on to my third count—that Mr. Spencer identifies moral goodness with pleasure. Turn we to the *Data of Ethics*. "There is one postulate," he instructs us, "in which pessimists and optimists agree. Both their arguments assume it to be self-evident that life is good or bad, according as it does, or does not, bring a surplus of agreeable feeling." "Thus there is no escape from the admission that in calling good the conduct which

enhances life, and bad the conduct which hinders or destroys it, and in so implying that life is a blessing and not a curse, we are inevitably asserting that conduct is good or bad, according as its total effects are pleasurable or painful." * Now, the doctrine of our new law-giver is, so far, perspicuous enough. It soon becomes much less pellucid. "Sworn foe to mystery, yet divinely dark," he goes on to enlarge on the fact that pleasures are "incommensurable," and so lets in, if need be, a moral good, distinct, *in genere suo*, by the whole breadth of its essence, from a mere "agreeable feeling." † But at last he openly declares that he accepts "the hedonistic end considered in the abstract," though not the methods whereby current hedonism would obtain it,‡ which, as I have already had occasion to observe, is a mere matter of detail. He insists on "the truth that conduct is considered by us as good or bad, according as its aggregate results, to self or others, or both, are pleasurable or painful." He holds that "every other proposed standard of conduct derives its authority from this standard;" that "whether perfection of nature is the assigned proper end, or virtuousness of action, or rectitude of motive . . . .

* § 10.

† See the passage beginning "Were pleasures all of one kind, differing only in degree," in § 56, and, indeed, the whole of chap. ix. Much of his criticism of Bentham and the empirical Utilitarians turns on this distinction.

‡ § 58.

definition of the perfection, the virtue, the rectitude inevitably brings us down to happiness experienced in some form, at some time, by some person, as the fundamental idea." * I ask, is happiness identical with agreeable feeling? If so, we shall find it difficult to convince the thief that he should not appropriate his neighbour's property, or the libertine that he should not corrupt his neighbour's wife. If, however, it is an ambiguous word, covering "right for right's sake," no less than "pleasure for pleasure's sake," one may fairly protest that a science should not be built on an *équivoque*. In any case, where is the moral obligation, the "ought" in all this? However, Mr. Spencer concludes that "pleasure is as much a necessary form of moral intuition as space is a necessary form of intellectual intuition." †

And now I ask the reader to look at the argument upon which all this wordy edifice is founded. "If virtue is primordial and independent," Mr. Spencer declares in his usual *ex cathedra* style, "no reason can be given why there should be any correspondence between virtuous conduct and conduct that is pleasure-giving in its total effects on self, or others, or both; and if there is not a necessary correspondence, it is conceivable that the conduct classed as virtuous should be pain-giving in its total effects." ‡ He undertakes hereupon to

* *Ibid.* § 15. † *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.* § 13. See the argument at length, pp. 32-44.

show by the examples of courage and chastity, that "the conception of virtue cannot be separated from the conception of happiness-producing conduct." And so he concludes that the fundamental idea is happiness. It really would seem as if Mr. Spencer, absorbed in the attempt to make our higher faculties, by physical methods, out of our lower, had never had leisure to acquire even an elementary knowledge of metaphysics. It is imposible, on any other hypothesis, to understand how he could have committed himself to such a proceeding—and it is by no means unusual with him—as that exemplified in the argument which we are considering. This is what it amounts to. Because two orders of being are inseparably united in our experience, let us proceed to identify them, and then deduce the higher from the lower, as intellect from feeling, will from instinct, mind from matter, and now virtue from happiness. I beg the judicious reader to ponder this awhile. And then let him go on with me to ask, Can it be maintained that courage and chastity, judged by this standard of the expedient, always are virtues? What shall be said, from the strictly utilitarian point of view, of the preventive check, of prostitution, nay, of some of the most monstrous forms of unnatural vice? Can they be condemned *semper ubique et ab omnibus*, which is the case with everything intrinsically bad, according to transcendental moralists? Is courage a virtue

when it means certain death to the individual and poverty to his wife and children? Or when he could put money in his purse, and so obtain the means of much "agreeable feeling," by betraying or destroying his comrades? "Yes," says Mr. Spencer, "because it benefits the race." "But why should I benefit the race at the expense of my life—the only existence, as you teach me, which I have?" "Because, in so doing, you gratify certain emotions, the result of organised past experience within you." "Nay," I humbly answer, "not within me, for I don't feel them in the least; I am a coward and a scoundrel by nature." "But if you do not feel them you ought to feel them." "How 'ought'? I cannot be more developed than I am developed. Do you mean that I am free to feel them, in spite of my coward and scoundrel nature, and should exercise my free-will and try to feel them?" "No, no; freewill is, of course, an objective and subjective illusion; what I mean is that if you do not feel them, your character will be bad." "What of that? Can I help it? But what do you mean by 'bad,' except giving myself pleasure at the cost of another's pain? Well, why should I not? Is not life a struggle for existence, where the rule is, 'devil take the hindmost'?" "But evolution would go on faster if your conduct were good." This is really too much for my unscientific nature. "Evolution?" I reply. "What signifies to me that 'redistribu-

tion of matter and motion,' which, as you tell me, 'constitutes evolution?' What do I care that my 'actions, when decomposed into motions, must exemplify its laws?'* Damn evolution and its laws! Anyhow, I cannot help doing what I am doing, and even if I could, *where is the obligation?*"

Where is the obligation? Let us see what answer Mr. Spencer is by way of giving to this momentous question. And yet, in truth it is not *this* question which he even so much as attempts to answer. The problem which he considers is, "How does there arise the feeling of moral obligation generally?" (Note "the *feeling* of moral obligation.") He replies at length, that it arises like the abstract notion of colour by prescinding from the particular varieties of "re-representive feelings," or "the mutual cancelling of their diverse components."† This he will have to be its genesis: "Accumulated experiences have produced the consciousness that the guidance by feelings which refer to remote and general results is *usually more conducive to welfare* than guidance by feelings to be immediately gratified. The idea of authoritativeness has therefore come to be connected with feel-

* "If that redistribution of matter and motion constituting evolution goes on in all aggregates, its laws must be fulfilled in the most developed being, as in every other thing; and his actions, when decomposed into motions, must exemplify its laws."—*Data of Ethics*, § 29.

† *Ibid.* § 46.

ings having those traits (remote, future, &c.), the implication being that the lower and simpler feelings are without authority." * I must interpose the question, Does experience warrant this distinction? Are we not under the obligation, sometimes, of acting quite irrespective of the future? Take, for example, Callista, in Cardinal Newman's touching story, refusing a grain of incense to Jupiter, though uncertain, not only of the Christian heaven, but of immortality. Would Mr. Spencer say she was acting for the future good of the race? But she was not thinking of the race. Oh, yes, she was, unconsciously; he replies. In other words, he imports his theory into an act, where no one can find a trace of it by introspection or analysis. Surely this is apriorism run mad. But let us turn to Mr. Spencer's account of the other element in "the feeling of moral obligation," coerciveness. "To the effects of punishment inflicted by law and public opinion on conduct of certain kinds, Dr. Bain ascribes the feeling of moral obligation. And I agree with him to the extent of thinking that by them is generated the sense of compulsion which the consciousness of duty includes, and which the word obligation indicates." † Mr. Spencer goes on to observe that, in his opinion "the earlier and deeper element generated as above described," also resides in it, "the feeling constituted by representation of the natural penalties." Inbred selfishness

* *Ibid.* The italics are mine. † *Ibid.*

plus the fear of the police constable: such is, in effect, his explanation of what we have been wont to call the moral sense! What are we to say to it? Perhaps it is hardly worth while to say anything. Let me content myself with pointing out that in his account of "the genesis of the sentiment of moral obligation" compared with the abstract notion of colour, Mr. Spencer gives us another specimen of that peculiar method of his in metaphysics on which I have already animadverted. Colour in general, no doubt, is known by abstraction from colours in particular. But moral obligation in general cannot by any possibility be abstracted from a representation of "the natural consequences" in particular, for the very simple reason that it is not contained in them. "Moral" is one genus; "natural consequences," meaning pains or pleasures, another. And in abstracting, as in syllogizing, we are forbidden to pass from this genus to that genus. This is elementary metaphysics. If the specific thing called morality is not in the particular actions under the form of "authority" and "coerciveness," it cannot be got from them by abstraction. If it is, the genesis of it remains to be investigated, and cannot be explained by an abstraction which has not yet taken place. The sophism is glaring. From particular colours, colour in general. *Concedo.* From particular pleasures and pains, pleasure and pain in general. By all means. But from the representation of (future) pleasures and pains,

morality in general! Why not, then, sunbeams from cucumbers, or the sense of ethical justice from the varieties of the triangle?

I venture to think, therefore, that Mr. Spencer has no sort of rational answer to give to the question, What is the obligation to right conduct? To show that such conduct is likely to result in "agreeable feeling" to the individual, is not to invest it with an ethical obligation. To show that it is likely to result in "agreeable feeling" to others—the tribe, the race, posterity—is not to invest it with an ethical obligation. These are mere motives, the strength of which will vary indefinitely, as characters or circumstances vary. They can be nothing more than motives. The desirable is one thing: the obligatory is quite another. In Mr. Spencer's ethics, obligation has no place—not even that provisional and transitory place which he attempts to provide for it.* Nor is this to be wondered at. The truth is, as the old Greek proverb tersely expresses it, "To be good is *difficult*." Duty implies self-sacrifice, and can never come out of selfishness, however sublimated. On Mr. Spencer's principles no valid reason can be given why the individual is ever bound to sacrifice

* "The sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory and will diminish as fast as moralisation increases. . . . . With complete adaptation to the social state that element in the moral consciousness which is expressed by the word obligation will disappear."—*Data of Ethics*, § 46.

himself. This difficulty, and others of a like kind, have driven Mr. Spencer to the expedient of describing an imaginary ethics, prevailing in an imaginary society of perfect individuals, in which self-sacrifice is not required. He takes refuge in what he calls "the ideal." He cannot answer the questions raised by experience, and so he applies himself, by the aid of that same experience, to draw out the laws and customs of a social organism which, on his own confession, is as purely unreal as Rousseau's "state of nature." As Mr. Sidgwick observes, he "proposes to deduce from fundamental principles what conduct *must* be detrimental and what *must* be beneficial." How can he know what *must* be! "Science" talks of what is, and has been. And the perfect social organism neither is nor has been. In experience, the happiness of all has never yet been reconciled with the happiness of each. How, again I ask, can self-sacrifice be a duty? Yet it is a duty. Shall we appeal to "the nature of things?" Mr. Spencer, with all the weight of vast volumes expended on the subject, declares the nature of things to be unknowable. All he can do is to affirm that it may result in "agreeable feeling" for some, if others undergo very disagreeable feeling; that in the progress of the car of Juggernaut, these must be crushed, while their fellows ride over them. But that is not morality; that is the struggle for existence. It is impossible by definition that a struggle for existence

can consist with *universal* welfare. And I want to know what, according to the Spencerian doctrine, are the laws of conduct binding on the less endowed individual in that struggle. Is he to execute himself with a smiling face? Where is the justice? How bring home to him the obligation?

In one place, indeed, Mr. Spencer makes the significant admission, "It is not self-evident, as Bentham alleges, that happiness is an intelligible end while justice is not; but, contrariwise, examination makes evident the greater intelligibility of justice as an end." * Yet Mr. Spencer had previously told us that pleasure is to the intuition of morality what space is to intellectual intuition! It would appear, however, from this passage, that the relation between justice and happiness is by no means clear. Indeed, if it were so, the same computation might be made and the same result reached, whichever of them we took for our starting-point. In any case, it is required by the principle of Hedonism, that we should pursue justice only so far as the facts will warrant us in holding, that it will produce more agreeable feeling than injustice, on the given occasion. And will the facts always, or indeed generally, warrant us in so holding? How comes it that an opposite conviction is so often urged by some thoughtful people as an argument for a life to come, and by others as

* *Data of Ethics*, § 60.

a defence of Pessimism? The truth is that consequences are hidden from us. Mr. Spencer, in effect, bids us to go by faith, be governed by emotion, and trust in the extremely ambiguous experience of past ages. And this in the name of "science!" But Mr. Spencer is really well aware that "experience" will not yield him Optimism. Hence, as I have observed, he takes refuge in what he calls "the ideal." The world accords so ill with his theories—"Qu'il a fallu s'en faire un autre et inventer." "Pleasure," he predicts, "will eventually accompany every mode of action demanded by social conditions."* What—*every* mode of action? For example, chimney-sweeping, scavengering, and listening to Parliamentary eloquence? Yes. All will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds; where altruism, not implying self-sacrifice, will be reconciled with Mr. Spencer's great fundamental principle of "agreeable feeling." Well, suppose, as obedient children, we humbly receive this lively oracle concerning the land that is very far off. But until that perfect consummation and bliss, must the virtues which do imply self-sacrifice wait to be justified in the eyes of men and women—a great multitude which no man could number—now called to practise them? Alas! their eyes will have been closed, their poor chance of some scrap of earthly felicity—the only felicity—will have passed away, long ages before, on Mr.

* *Data of Ethics*, § 67.

Spencer's own showing, his millennium arrives. Certainly Jesus Christ should have delayed His coming until then! But perhaps the Crucifixion was only an act of refined selfishness, bringing with it the agreeable feeling of satisfied emotions. Has not Mr. Spencer favoured the world with a receipt for transmuting the most specious altruism into the most manifest egoism? *

In a theory resting on happiness as its corner-stone, the question of the value of life is of primary importance. Mr. Spencer contrives to leave it out altogether. The arguments of his *Data of Ethics*, he tells us at its conclusion, "are valid only for optimists." † Here, again, he is led to discourse copiously on the "ideal" society and the "straight" man; inconvenient questions about the real society and the crooked man, about crime, vice, pain, disease, and misery in general being put by. He does not take the totality of experience, but merely so much as lends itself to his argument. How comes it, I would ask, that man, who, as we are told to believe, is always as much developed as he can be developed, should generally or always suffer, as if he did not correspond to his environment? He does correspond to it; he cannot help corresponding, in every stage. Yet he has to suffer. Is there really, after all, no such thing as the problem of

* See the Appendix to the *Data of Ethics*, pp. 289-303.

† *Ibid.* p. 307.

evil? * or has Mr. Spencer solved it? He tells us that self-sacrifice is a transitional form of virtue. Be it so. But are pain and death also transitional? Mr. Spencer appeals to experience. But so little do his ethics agree with experience, that he is compelled to invent a Laputa in which they will, as he hopes, be verified. The question for Hedonists being, whether it is worth while to aim at such pleasures as life, at present, affords, whether morality, even as they account of it, brings an adequate reward, he answers, "I waive that point; I am addressing none but optimists." But surely this is to put himself altogether out of court.

So much must suffice, at all events for our present purpose, concerning Mr. Spencer's Evolutionary Ethics. We have found that he is committed to the following propositions.—It is absurd to speak of eternal principles of right and wrong, these being purely human conceptions, without meaning when applied to the nature of things. Virtues are founded on expediency; not on a direct calculation of what is expedient, but on the registration of it in the organism. What is called moral obligation has

* At p. 318 of his *Data of Ethics* Mr. Spencer glances at the question whether pain be the only evil. The reader should note that by a dexterous use of the word "pain," two quite incommensurable evils, moral and physical, may be treated as if they were identical.

its authority, in part, from this instinct, and, in part, from the action of human law and public opinion. All that does happen, happens by that redistribution of matter and motion which constitutes evolution: a process of beneficent necessity, the cause whereof is neither moral nor immoral. There is no such thing as a real human personality, but only a succession of states of consciousness. Freewill is a subjective and objective delusion, and man having no power of choosing the least pleasurable of two courses, all moral conduct is determined by the surplus of agreeable feeling, either in the present agent or in his ancestors. Self-sacrifice is a higher egoistic satisfaction. Altruism need not imply self-sacrifice, and in the ideal state never will. To this should be added, in order to make the sketch complete, that in the principle "outer relations produce inner relations," we have "an explanation of the advance from the simplest to the most complex cognitions:" "from the simplest to the most complex feelings:" * attraction and repulsion transform themselves into the phenomena of egoism and altruism, and morality results from the persistence of force.† Now what are we to say of this system of ethics? I say that it is a house of cards, built upon a foundation of sand.

* *Principles of Psychology*, § 214.

† See *First Principles* and *Principles of Psychology*, *passim*.

CHAPTER IV.

RATIONAL ETHICS.

It appears to me that the Positivism, Phenomenism, Materialism, of which I have had so much to say in the preceding chapters, should be regarded as a revolt against Reason. "In the beginning was the Logos," writes the author of the Fourth Gospel, popularising for the Christian world the truth at the heart of Plato's philosophy, that the Divine Reason is the ground of being. The teachers whose doctrines I have been criticising, essay, like Faust, a different reading, and for Reason would substitute Sense: "Im Anfang war der Sinn." It is their primary postulate, their dominant dogma, that the thoughts and wills of men are a mere derivate from, a mere amalgam of, animal sensations: the effect of forces inherent in external things, which are ever changing; which, as we are not unfrequently told, "are essentially constituted by the sum of their relations." The phrase, I may observe in passing, is a contradiction in terms: for how can relation be essence? It is like saying that the outside is the inside. Relativity is the first and

last word of the new philosophy: the correlation of things and forces, in their varying moods, its one theme. The Absolute it denies, or relegates to the domain of the unknown and unknowable. Fixed standard of good, amid the flux and reflux of phenomena, it has none to offer. But the old philosophy, that has hitherto informed the civilisation of the Western World, reposes upon Reason, which is essentially irrelative. It is rooted and grounded in the Absolute: the Absolute without us and the Absolute within us. It bids us look into our own breasts, and seek there the source of our conceptions, our decisions. This is, if I may so speak, a fundamental idea of Christianity, underlying its dogmatic theology. But it is not necessarily bound up with Christian dogma. In these latter days one of its most effective preachers has certainly been Kant. It was his "high emprize" to overthrow the negative psychology of the sensualistic school, which he found predominant, by showing that the human intellect possesses its own organisation, innate, independent of experience, and necessary even for the formation of thought: to exhibit substance, causality, law, as intuitive conceptions of the mind, and to point us, for their explanation, not to the perceptions of Sense, but to the judgments of Reason.

To Reason, then, must we resort for the true basis

of ethics. And by Reason I understand—in Coleridge's happy words—"the power of universal and necessary convictions; the source and substance of truths above sense, and having their evidence in themselves." In opposition to the teachers whose views we have been considering, I hold that there is a higher law than that which finds expression in the sterile formulas of Materialism, a law which is not evolved from physical instincts, from the force of habit, from imitation, from human respect, from selfishness, personal or tribal, called, in the slipshod jargon of the day, "utility;" a law which, as Aquinas writes, is immutable truth, wherein every man shares who comes into the world. That old doctrine of Natural Right, now so contemptuously rejected as a chimera of the schools or an idol of the den, I hold to be a sound doctrine, and the only sure foundation of civilised life. I believe in the existence of justice anterior to all experience, and wholly independent of empirical deductions. I am persuaded that the moral law exists apart from the ephemeral race of man; that it existed before that race appeared and will exist after that race has vanished from the earth; that it is absolutely supreme over us, as over the totality of being; and that we possess an organon whereby we may apprehend it. I shall proceed to give my reasons for this faith that is in me, and without which human life would lose for me its dignity and value. In what I am

about to write I prescind entirely from all theological theories and religious symbols. I admit, or rather I insist, that morality is in a true sense independent. I mean this, that our intuitions of right and wrong are first principles anterior to all systems, just as are the intuitions of existence and of number. Now morality is a practical science. Its subject is man as he lives, moves, and has his being in the well-nigh infinite complexity of social relations. Its conclusions must, therefore, have to do with the concrete, the conditioned, for it is the science of human life. But then it views man transcendentally—not only going beyond the facts of sense, by means of our imaginative faculty, but grasping that spiritual substance which cannot fall within the range of physics. It is only in the light of the ideal atmosphere which envelops and penetrates our intellect, and which is the very breath of life to our spiritual being, that we can discern ethical principles. I very confidently affirm that the progress of the physical sciences has not in the least changed the moral conditions of human existence. And Mr. Huxley must pardon me if I say, that when he tells us "Natural knowledge, in desiring to ascertain the laws of comfort, has been driven to discover those of conduct," he does but darken counsel by words without knowledge. It would be as reasonable to assert, that ethical knowledge affords an explanation of the common pump. Ethics are concerned with the actions of men: physics with the properties of matter.

There is this essential difference between the natural and the moral order, that physical science deals with facts, and the generalisations obtained from them by means of the principle—assumed but never proved—of the uniformity of nature; while ethical science starts from self-evident intuitions and categorical assertions. Thus its principles are, in the strictest sense, transcendental. Not to experience does the ethical "ought" appeal, but to the reason of things. It is founded not upon the physical, but upon the metaphysical; not the relative, but upon the absolute; not upon the phenomenal, but upon the noumenal. Not among the beggarly elements of the external universe, but in the inner world of consciousness, of volition, of finality, must we seek the ultimate bases of right and duty. Yes; in its own sphere morality is autonomous. It is absolutely independent both of religious systems and of the physical sciences. It is a branch of what Leibnitz called *perennis quædam philosophia*—a universal metaphysic which endures though "creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth sure"; though steam and electricity and dynamite revolutionise the external conditions of human life. That philosophy—whether we term it natural, or intuitive, or traditional—embodies a number of first principles which are part of our intellectual heritage, and of which we may say, in the words of the tragic poet, "They are from everlasting, and no man knows their birthplace." Among these are the ideas and principles which

are creative of ethics. The savage who does not in some way distinguish between right and wrong is not extant; and if he were, he would not be man, but something lower. There is, there can be, no new morality in the sense of new original principles. The conception of moral right was not absent from mankind before biology became a science, or until the Royal Society was founded; neither by any process of chemistry or mechanics can it be reduced to the attractions or repulsions of matter, or its presence detected by instruments, however fine. The rule of ethics is the natural and permanent revelation of reason. Let us see what that revelation is.

What is the most certain portion of all my knowledge? Surely it is this, that I—the thinking being—exist. In strictness all my knowledge is subjective. Of what is external to myself I know nothing except its potentiality. My knowledge of it, directly or indirectly, is dependent upon my sensations, which tell me, to some extent, its qualities, but do not tell me what it really is, or whether it is anything, if abstraction be made of its qualities. The forms of intuition and of rational induction supply a criterion of certitude infinitely transcending any afforded by what it is the custom to call "positive and verifiable experience." Now, as I have already insisted, the presence in our consciousness of the first principles of morality

is an indubitable fact. As surely as I am conscious of myself, so am I conscious of moral obligation. "There is," writes Turgot, "an instinct, a sentiment of what is good and right, that Providence has engraven on all hearts, which is anterior to formal ratiocination, and which leads the philosophers of all ages back to the same fundamental principles of ethics." * I am quite willing to leave "Providence"—the divine concept—out of the question here. I wish, just now, to go merely by the facts of human nature. And one of these facts—a primary one—is, I say, the sense of ethical obligation. Aristotle considered it the special attribute of man that he is a moral being, enjoying perception of good and evil, justice and injustice, and the like. It is the doctrine of the *Politics* that this marks man off from the rest of animate existence. We know now more than that great master knew concerning the creatures inferior to man in the scale of being. For myself, I cannot deny the rudiments, at least, of an ethical sense to some of them, the raw material of the morality which is to be. I believe with Professor Huxley—and it is always a pleasure to agree with him—that "even the highest faculties of feeling . . . . begin to germinate in lower forms of life." Nature appears to me a vast hierarchy of being, in which one order passes into another by gradations so fine as to require "larger, other eyes than ours" to trace them. Without thought—

* *Œuvres*, vol. ii. p. 602.

Reason—in the ground of things, this wide sphere of life is unintelligible to me. I hold with Kant that mere senseless mechanism is quite insufficient to explain organic products.* With him, I regard the entire history of organic life as a process of development, brought about by the action of immaterial causes upon the forces and properties of matter. But unquestionably it is of man only, that we can predicate consciousness in the full sense of the term. "Nature," said Schelling, "sleeps in the plant, dreams in the animal, wakes in the man." Everywhere, throughout her vast domain, we seem to see the striving after individuality. Everywhere there is, in some sort, a principle of unity, be it in the atom of the inorganic world, the cell in the lower vegetable forms, or the whole organism in the higher. The plant has life in itself. Is it conscious of that life? "For 'tis my faith that every flower enjoys the air it breathes." So Wordsworth, soaring in the high reason of his fancies. Who shall say that he is wrong? In the animal world we find a further development of individuality. The action of mechanism becomes less and less. Here is motion, self-originated; here is some

* So Aristotle: "He who asserted that there is in nature, as in animals, an intelligence which is the cause of the universe and of all order, seems a sober man when we think of the ill-advised utterances of his predecessors. Now we know, clearly, that Anaxagoras first touched upon these views." *Met.* I. c. iii.

degree of spontaneity; here is consciousness, imperfect, indeed, but extending we know not how far; here are psychical faculties well marked, however scantily developed; here is a certain accountableness. But in man we have more. Of him only, I say, can consciousness be predicated in the proper meaning of the word. He alone can recognise and will the creative thought of his being. He alone is free, for he exists for himself and not for another.* He alone is an individual in the completest sense. He is more; he is a person. Thing, individual, person—*ens*, *suppositum*, *hypostasis*, as the scholastics have it—these are the three degrees in the dynamic evolution of being. At what period in history the personality of man emerged, we know not. But assuredly, whenever the period was, his personality was due to the growth, side by side with sensuous and instinctive impulses, of another very different faculty, which gave him quite other grounds of action. That was the dawn of reason, which rendered man's liberty possible, which enabled him to become *potens sui*, master of his fate, by emancipating him from the yoke of instinct as no other animal is emancipated. Free volition implies the power of choosing a course of action, without regard to the weight of motives, for

* I have before my mind the definition of freedom given by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*; ἐλεύθερος ἄνθρωπος ὁ αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ μὴ ἄλλου ὤν.

or against such course.* It may be truly called man's distinctive endowment, although the foreshadowings, the presentiments, of it—*μιμήματα τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς*—may be found in the lower animals. It is the essence, the very form of his personality: for it is the condition of the realisation of his ethical end, in virtue of which he is a Person. It is the basis as of ethics, so of jurisprudence and of politics—which are in truth mere branches of ethics—according to the pregnant dictum of Hegel, "The existence of Free Will is Right." It is to personality that rights attach. It is to personality that duties attach. Both spring up from the same essential ground of human nature. You cannot predicate duties where you cannot predicate rights. They are different aspects of one and the same thing. "From each duty issues a right, the right to be allowed to perform the duty, with precisely the same logical force as from necessity issues possibility." † Duty is the ethically necessary: the absolute and unconditioned claim of Right on *me*. Morality consists in deliberate self-submission to that necessity: in voluntary obedience to that claim. The power of willing right as right, and the con-

* It is a commonplace of the schools, "Liberum arbitrium habetur, quando positis ad agendum requisitis, potest quis agere vel non agere." There are cases of non-physical necessity, *e.g.*, of a single determining motive, of a spiritual instinct, of a knowledge exhibiting the object as *omni ex parte bonum*, where freewill does not exist.

† Trendelenburg, *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, § 45.

sciousness that he ought to will it, are primary facts of man's nature. And this free volition, determined by the idea of good, is in itself a revelation of the moral law. The autonomy of the will is the object of that "lex perfecta libertatis." "The ethical faculty," as we read in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "enunciates laws which are imperative or objective laws of freedom."

When, then, we speak of the moral law, we mean that rule of action which necessarily arises out of the relation of Reason to itself as its own end. Necessity is its primary note. And it is a necessity of a quite unique kind. The word is sometimes misapplied to the regular sequence or uniform movements of matter, to the simultaneity of sensible events. It is rightly used of mathematical relations. But the mathematically necessary is one thing; the morally necessary is quite another. The special characteristic of the morally necessary is denoted by the word "ought." It is nonsense to say that two sides of a triangle ought to be greater than the third, or that two and two ought to make four. The necessity which the word "ought" expresses is derived from a law of ideal relation, obligatory on our wills. Nor can you derive that necessity from self-love, or prudence, or interest, tribal or personal. It is absurd to say that a man *ought* to seek "agreeable feeling." Expedience, utility can but counsel. The moral law commands. It claims

obedience as a thing absolutely good, as an end in itself; and by that very claim it exhibits itself as transcending the range of human experience, as universal, eternal, supreme over "all thinking things, the objects of all thought." Of this law the organon is the Practical Reason, the Moral Understanding, Conscience. "Law rational," says Hooker, "which men commonly use to call the law of nature, comprehendeth all those things which men by the light of their natural understanding evidently know, or at leastwise may know, to be beseeming or unbeseeming, virtuous or vicious, good or evil for them to do." "The several grand mandates, which being imposed by the understanding faculty of the mind, must be obeyed by the will of man," "are such that it is not easy to find men ignorant of them."* Are we here met with an objection that as a matter of fact the moral judgments, which have obtained among men, are diverse and irreconcilable? The objection is not a novel one, and, as Hooker goes on to observe, it was sufficiently met by St. Augustine a thousand years ago. "Do as thou wouldst be done to, is a sentence which all nations under heaven are agreed upon;" and here is the sufficient germ of a complete ethical code. The sense of duty is a form of the mind itself, although it may be said to exist as "a

* *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I. c. 8. Compare Aquinas: "Lex naturalis nihil aliud est quam participatio legis æternæ in rationali creatura." *Summa*, 1, 2, q. 91, art. 2.

blank formula," which is filled up in a variety of ways. "The altruistic instinct," as the barbarous jargon of the day calls it, is as much a fact of human nature as "the egoistic instinct." The sense of duty is universal; it is an essential attribute of our nature, inseparable from the consciousness of self and non-self; not a complete revelation, but the revelation of an idea, bound to develop according to its laws, like the idea, say, of geometry. The ethical ignorance of barbarous tribes is no more an argument against the moral law, than their ignorance of the complex and recondite properties of lines and figures is an argument against geometrical law. It is the function of the intellect, here as elsewhere, to evolve abstract truths from the complex and chaotic mass of appearances and events, and to clothe them in formulas which shall serve as current coin. That very word, "conscience," by which we now designate consciousness considered as a moral judge, is of comparatively late origin. It was unknown to the writers of the Hebrew Sacred Books.* They speak of "heart" instead. It does not occur in the Gospels, except in the history of the woman taken in adultery, which the most authoritative critics of our own day—whether rightly or wrongly, I do not undertake to say—regard as an interpolation. It was only after

* It is found in the *Book of Wisdom* (ch. xvii.), as might, of course, be expected.

nascent Christianity appealed to the Gentiles, and to the Jews scattered abroad, that the word was, so to speak, naturalised in it. And then it was a new word, in the Hellenic world: it seems not to have come into use until after the Peloponnesian War. So much as to the history of the term by which we commonly describe the subjective organ of ethical knowledge. Mr. Spencer tells us that both that subjective organ and the moral law are in a permanent state of becoming. I do not doubt—I shall indeed have occasion, presently, to insist—that our insight into the moral law grows deeper in successive ages. But that does not deprive either conscience, or the moral law, of their imperative character for each particular act recognised by me as obligatory, any more than it implies the destruction of ethical liberty, properly understood. What I discern as my duty is binding upon me, *hic et nunc*, whether my mental vision be true or false. The point upon which my conscience never varies is, that duty exists. It is in vain for Montaigne to assert, "les lois de la conscience, que nous disons naître de la nature, naissent de la coutume": "les règles de la justice ne sont qu'une mer flottante d'opinions." Montaigne confounds the idea of duty in general with men's notions of their particular duties.

In that record of man's action which we call history, Right and Wrong are the most important words. Human progress means, before all things,

the education of conscience: the widening of the circle of ethical obligation; the deeper apprehension of the moral law, that is of justice, wherein, according to the fine verse of the Hellenic poet, adopted by Aristotle, "lies the whole of virtue's sum." And justice, as Ulpian, quoted in the first chapter of this volume, defines it, is "the constant and perpetual will to render to each man his right." This "right," it is sometimes said, arises from the primordial idea of the person in himself. It is well said; but the statement requires to be guarded, for only in society is personality realised; "Unus homo, nullus homo." Hence that other dictum, which must be received with even greater caution, that right is the offspring of civilisation. True it is that right is not the attribute of man in Rousseau's "state of nature." The precivilised epoch to which he turned for his Utopia was, in fact, an epoch of the reign of chaotic violence, of ferocious cruelty, of hideous cannibalism, of dirt unspeakable, of sexual promiscuity, of lying and hypocrisy. And such is the state which his doctrines tend to bring back. Unquestionably, it is society alone that gives validity to right, for man is, in Aristotle's phrase, "a political animal." If we follow the historical method only, we must pronounce the birth-place of right to have been the family, from which civil polity has been developed. But if we view the matter ideally, we must say that the experience of the race is here merely an occasion,

not a cause; it does not create, it merely reveals right. The social organism exhibits that which lies in the nature of man, deep down in the inmost recesses of his being, but which could never have come out of him in isolation. The idea of right unfolds itself in history as the vivifying principle of those public ordinances and political institutions, whereby we live as civilised men; the justification of the common might, which, without it, would be mere brute force. And as that idea is ever-increasingly realised in the ethical fellowship of successive generations, as the moral tone of the social organism rises, so do individual conceptions of right become clearer and more adequate. For man is not only "a political animal." He is also a historical animal. And this it is, even more than the Aristotelian criterion, which marks him off from the rest of sentient existence. Consider, on the one hand, the savage warrior torturing his captive enemy, his untutored mind not suspecting that he is acting unrighteously; and on the other, contemplate John Howard on his "circumnavigation of charity," not counting his life dear so that he may redress injustice done to criminals. Thus has the idea of right grown in the human conscience. But an idea, in the true sense of the word, it is. The great legists to whom we owe the majestic fabric of Roman jurisprudence knew this well. Hence their emphatic recognition of the transcendental foundation of

private right. It was an expression of the august doctrine, which they had learnt from the philosophers of the Porch, that universal reason governs the world; that the lives of men should be regulated by that supreme order which is justice in the soul, beauty in the body, and harmony in the spheres. But it is to the Founder of Christianity and the doctors of His religion—conspicuous among them the masters of the medieval school—that the world owes the clearest, the most prevailing, the most cogent teaching as to the universality of right and the solidarity of mankind. Now this characteristic of universality is an essential note of ethics. The theory of the moral law must be founded on reason. To make of it a mere deduction from experience is to perform a mortal operation upon it, is to reduce right and wrong to a question of temperament, of environment, of cuisine, of latitude and longitude. Hence the precept which Kant lays down for our conduct, the rule by which he bids us try and test its ethical worth: Act so that the motive of thy will may always be equally valid as a principle of universal legislation. I do not say that this maxim is alone adequate as the fundamental thought of ethics. It may be open to the criticism that it is rather the uniform view of a criterion than the pregnant principle of morals. But, at all events, in its recognition of universality it builds upon the everlasting rock.

What a change to turn from the ampler æther,

the diviner air of this spacious thought, to the stifling empirical doctrine prevailing in our own country, at which we glanced in the second chapter. The belief that human law can be the ultimate ground and the only measure of right is, indeed, upon the face of it, so untenable, that one is lost in wonder how it could possibly have obtained such credit. All rights the creation of positive law! The right to existence, for example? Or the right of self-defence? Or the right to use, to the best advantage, one's moral and spiritual faculties? Imagine a number of settlers, in a new country, before they have had time to frame a polity. Are they then devoid of these rights? Surely it is sufficient to ask such a question. But we are told that human rights arise from a contract, express or implied. As a matter of fact, society is not founded upon convention, although I allow a virtual compact whence is derived the binding obligation of laws regarding things in themselves indifferent. But if the rights which I have instanced exist at all—and in practice everyone admits their existence—they possess universal validity. A contract may or may not be. It is contingent. But these rights must be. They are absolute. Right is founded on necessity. What is necessary and immutable cannot proceed from the accidental and changeable. And rights are subjective expressions of Right. To me it is evident, upon the testimony of reason itself, that there are certain rights of man which exist

anterior to and independently of positive law, which do not arise *ex contractu* or *quasi ex contractu*, and which may properly be called natural, because they originate in the nature of things. And here let me express my regret at the scanty and uncertain treatment which this subject received from one of the most accomplished of English jurisprudents. In his *Ancient Law*, Sir Henry Maine tells us that "the law of Nature" as the Roman jurisconsults conceived of it, "confused the past and the present;" that "logically it implied a state of nature which once had been regulated by natural law," while "for all practical purposes it was something belonging to the present, something entwined with existing institutions, something which could be distinguished from them by a competent observer." The law of nature, as I understand it, and as I believe the Roman jurisconsults, following the great Hellenic philosophers from Aristotle downwards, understood it, belongs to the domain of the ideal. It is the type to which positive law should endeavour, as far as may be, to approximate; but the approximation must vary indefinitely according to social conditions. I am well aware that what is noumenally true may be phenomenally false; that in the life of men, principles must be viewed not in the abstract but in the concrete, as embodied in actual facts and institutions. I quite agree with Sir Henry Maine that, in jurisprudence we must rigorously adhere to

the historical method. But it also appears to me that the historical method alone is insufficient. Its conclusions should be tested, should be corrected, by that reason which is the ultimate court of appeal. The law of nature is an expression of the nature of things in their ethical relations. The natural rights of man have an ideal—which means most real—value, as showing the goal to which society, in unison with individual efforts, should tend. We live in a world of objects conditioned by ideas. A right is that one possession of the individual, with which, in virtue of the moral law, no power outside him can interfere. And what is right, in another, is duty in me. All human rights are really but different aspects of that one great aboriginal right of man to belong to himself, to realise the idea of his being. And justice means respect for those rights. In strictness, positive law—the rule of reciprocal liberty—does not make but merely recognises and guarantees them. A Prætorian edict, an Act of Parliament, is not their source but their channel. Our codes are only formulas in which we endeavour, with greater or less success, to apply, in particular conditions of life and social environment, the dictates of that universal law which is absolute and eternal Righteousness. This is, in Burke's magnificent language, "that great immutable, pre-existent law, prior to our devices and prior to all our sensations, antecedent to our very existence, by

which we are knit and connected in the eternal frame of the universe, out of which we cannot stir." This law, the great Roman orator had declared two thousand years before, "no nation can overthrow or annul; neither a senate nor a whole people can relieve us from its injunctions. It is the same in Athens and in Rome; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." This is the law of which Hooker majestically proclaims, "Her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power."

"God is law, say the wise." In Him the ethical order is eternally conceived, eternally realised. But the moral law leads to, is not derived from, the Theistic idea. It bears witness to verities eternal, transcendental, noumenal. Its correspondence with the needs of our nature proclaims to us, as with the voice of an archangel and the trump of God, that final causes are a necessary element in ethics. From the fact of ethical obligation we ascend to its source in the Infinite and Eternal.* Hence Kant finds

* "I certainly am not prepared to deny," observes Mr. Sidgwick, with his usual caution, "that the conception of duty, in ordinary minds, carries with it the implied relations of an individual will with a universal will, conceived as perfectly rational."—*The Methods of Ethics*, p. 216, Third Edition.

in the moral law a natural idea of pure Theism. Tied down to the phenomenal world, as he esteems, on all sides of our being, by the very conditions of knowledge, we have here a way of escape into the noumenal. He judges that the realisation of the highest good which the ethical faculty, the practical reason, prescribes, implies an order above that of nature. There *must* be, he argues, a life beyond the phenomenal, where the triumph of the moral law shall be assured, where its rewards and penalties shall be adequately realised; there *must* be a Supreme Moral Governor, who will bring about that triumph. Thus the speculative ideas of God and Immortality are practically warranted. And here is the crown of that ethical teleology, as which we must reckon the philosophical system of this powerful thinker, taken altogether. But in the moral law, Kant finds not only the promise of the life which is to come, but also of that which now is. "It is the fundamental fact, not only of individual existence, but of the social order. It is the supreme rule alike of private and public action; the sun of righteousness illuminating the world of rational being, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. For the great thinkers of the ancient world all duties—*officia*—were included in ethics: jurisprudence was a part of moral philosophy. The masters of the mediæval school judged likewise. It is from the time of the Renaissance that we may

trace the de-ethicising of public life."* Dr. Martineau has correctly observed that by Luther morals were treated "as matters of social police." Our modern utilitarianism is the logical outcome of his antinomianism. "Kant has again pointed the world to a more excellent way. He deduces the institution of the State from the categorical imperative of duty. It is for him essentially an ethical society, rooted and grounded in the moral law. Its very foundation is the rational acknowledgment that there are eternal, immutable, principles, and rules, of right and wrong. This is the everlasting adamant, upon which alone the social edifice can be surely established. Rear it upon any other foundation, and you do but build upon sand. However fair the structure may seem, fall it must, and great will be the fall of it."*

And now let me conclude this chapter by exhibiting, succinctly, what I hold to be the fundamental positions of Rational Ethics. The moral law, an expression of Universal Reason, is a formal law, sovereign over all; a law of ideal relation, obligatory upon all wills. The desire to do right as right—that alone is morality. The idea of "right" or "ethical good" is a simple aboriginal idea, not

* I am quoting here from my work, *A Century of Revolution*, p. 194.

decomposable into any other, but strictly *sui generis*. It cannot be resolved into the idea of happiness, or of pleasure, or of greatest usefulness; neither does it mean "commanded by the Deity," or "imposed by social needs." It admits of no definition save in terms of itself, which is equivalent to saying that it is an ultimate, like the perception of sweetness or of colour. It is innate, in the sense that every human being has the capacity of acquiring it. But it is not due to experience as a cause, nor does it depend for its obligation on calculations taken from experience. At the same time it has definite relations to various other ideas, while perfectly independent of them as to its essence. If, for example, it be said—as I do most emphatically say—that virtue is a necessary condition of "the greatest happiness* of the greatest number," this is by no means to resolve the idea of virtue into that of the greatest happiness. Or, again, if it be denied—as I do most emphatically deny—that a virtuous course of conduct ever

* Happiness is a question-begging word. "Our being's end, and aim?" Yes and No. It depends on what is meant by "happiness." If the good commonly called pleasure or "agreeable feeling" (bonum delectabile) is meant, No. Yes, if we are to understand by it what is called by Aristotle εὐδαιμονία, and by the scholastics *beatitudo:* a psychical state, arising from the equilibrium of the individual with his proper end—the Sovereign Good, the Everlasting Righteousness, the True Object of rational desire, in whom all ideals are realised. *That* is "our being's end, and aim."

> "Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühle selig bist,
> Nenn'es dann wie du willst,
> Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!"

can lead, by its very nature, to unhappiness: from this it by no means follows that such a course of conduct is virtuous because it cannot lead to unhappiness. Nay, even if the calculation of the sum of pleasures did, on every conceivable occasion, *indicate* which was the moral and which the immoral course, it would still remain true that such an indication would be extrinsic to the goodness or evil pointed out, would be neither its justification nor its explanation. Right, as such, differs from comfort, delectation, and expediency, as such, in its very essence, as hearing does from seeing, or feeling from intellect. The ideas are incommensurable; they have no common standard; they cannot be reduced, the one to the other, by any process of computation. "I ought" never does mean it is pleasantest for me, or for thee, or for all of us. It has therefore nothing to do, *in its own nature*, with Egoism, Altruism, Utilitarianism, or any method of reckoning consequences, save the one moral consequence, good or evil. Its only "because" is a moral because: "I ought, because to do so is morally right in the given circumstances; I ought not, because it is morally wrong." Does any one object that this is tautology? Not so. The first part of such sentences preceding the "because" contains the individual application to *me* of the axiomatic or universal formula contained in the part following it.

I feel deeply that it is of the utmost importance to insist upon these truths at the present day, when

there is so strong and so growing a tendency in the popular mind to believe that virtue and duty, justice and injustice, are mere matters of convention; when for the eternal distinction between true and false, right and wrong, we are so peremptorily bidden to substitute the uncouth shibboleths of a sect of physicists. I had occasion, not long ago, to cite the well-known dictum, "The rights of man are in a middle." The printers were good enough to make of it, "The rights of man are in a muddle." In a muddle indeed! My object in this chapter has been to let in, if possible, a little light upon the weltering chaos; to help my readers, in however small a degree, to give order and fixity to their ethical conceptions. But one is nothing in England if not what is called "practical." Your average Englishman does not care greatly whether there be a God or not, provided the price of stock does not fall. There is truth in Mr. Carlyle's account of him, that if you want to awaken his real beliefs, you must descend into his "stomach, purse, and the adjacent regions." Kant tells us that a man has reason and understanding. Reason seems to have well-nigh departed from the British mind since the overthrow among us of the Aristotelian philosopy by Hobbes and Locke. I quoted, in a former chapter, the statement which seems to me not unwarranted, that Mr. Herbert Spencer is *the* philosopher of the present day in England and in America. No wonder. He is most industrious, most precise, most con-

scientious, most clear, when he chooses, within certain limits. But they are narrow limits, like the four walls of a shop. Of the vast horizons beyond he has no knowledge. "The vision and the faculty divine," essential to all philosophy worthy of the name, are not in him. His popularity is an emphatic testimony to the singular unidealism—I had almost written the congenital imbecility—of the English mind in respect of eternal and divine realities. I suppose an effort should be made to heal it. But who is sufficient for these things? *Exoriare aliquis.* Meanwhile, in order to put myself in touch with the national sentiment, I shall, in the remaining chapters of this work, indicate six practical applications of the doctrine of Right and Wrong, upon which I have been insisting.

CHAPTER V.

THE ETHICS OF PUNISHMENT.

I HAVE before me the most considerable contribution made, of late, to the world's criminal jurisprudence: the new *Italian Penal Code*, together with the elaborate Report with which it was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies by Signor Zanardelli, the Minister of Grace, Justice, and Public Worship of the Italian Kingdom. These documents are, for many reasons, of great interest, and would well repay detailed examination. Here, however, I am concerned with them from only one point of view. The first question which a *Penal Code* suggests is, What is the *rationale* of punishment? That question Signor Zanardelli does not so much as discuss, deeming, apparently, that the matter is too plain. He contents himself with citing the dictum, "Pœna in paucos ut metus in omnes," observing, by way of comment upon it, that "when the penalty surpasses the limit required by this necessary end of prevention, it becomes useless punishment." His mind is dominated by the utilitarian view of the subject. And so in another place in his Report he lays it

down as a kind of axiom, "The whole endeavour of the legislator, in the discipline and proportion of penalties, ought to aim at rendering them capable of greater repressive energy, and of more vigorous corrective effect, at the same time." Punishment should deter and correct, and so prevent crime. That, according to this jurisprudent, is the whole account of criminal justice. Is it a sufficient account?

A great number of people, I take it, will be surprised that the question can even be asked. It has never dawned upon them that there can be any other reason for punishing a man, than to deter him, and, by his example, others, from the commission of crime, and, if possible, to reform him. And of these two reasons, the first would be taken to be the chief. The great object of the penal law is held to be the prevention of crime by presenting to men weightier motives for abstaining from it, than those which invite to its commission. Now I am far from denying that punishment is, and ought to be, deterrent. Man is not, as Rousseau taught, naturally good. The Terror set up by his Jacobin disciples, given over to a strong delusion to believe this lie, is the best comment upon their master's "central moral doctrine." "The evil in the world," is not, as Mr. John Morley would have us believe, "the result of bad education and bad institutions."* It has its root in the heart of man, whence "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adultery, fornication, thefts, false

* *Diderot*, vol. i. p. 5.

witness, blasphemies." Self-love is ever seeking its gratification at the expense of others; and fear, the mightiest and most universal of human affects, is its strongest curb. "Homo homini lupus," says the proverb. It is the true account of man, apart from law and justice. One important function of criminal jurisprudence is to tame and discipline the wild beast that is within us. Punishment is assuredly deterrent. And if it can be made remedial, so much the better, according to the inscription placed by Clement XI. over the door of the prison of St. Michael, "Parum est improbos coercere pœna, nisi probos efficias disciplina." It should, however, be noted, that in the mouths of Materialists "reformation" means nothing more than hindrance by fear of consequences, or prudent self-restraint. The only *ethical* signification of the word is conversion of the will from bad to good. But I deny that this is a sufficient account of punishment. I say that its primary object is not the protection of society, nor the reformation of the criminal. I say that it is first and before all things vindictive. I can well imagine how repulsive the word will sound in the ears of many. To me, that so elementary a truth should even require to be justified, is sad and strange indeed. It is a melancholy token how deeply Materialism has de-ethicised the public mind of a generation—

> "... wanting virtue to be strong
> Up to the measure of accorded might,
> And daring not to feel the majesty of right."

But let us look at the subject a little in detail.

We will start from a fact which every one will admit: the fact that punishment is associated in our minds with wrong-doing. Is the association necessary or accidental? The philosophy of relativity says it is accidental. That "the imposition of punishment is the distinctive property of acts held to be morally wrong" is, in substance, the teaching of utilitarian, experimental, and physical moralists generally. You make an act wrong, they tell us, by making it penal. It is not punished because it is wrong, but wrong because it is punished. Their idea of law is purely empirical. Force sufficiently explains it. In opposition to this doctrine I maintain, with Kant, that the connection between moral evil and punishment is not accidental, but necessary: the work of reason,* not of human caprice. I will proceed to explain why I hold this.

In the last chapter I have unfolded, at some length, what I understand to be meant by the moral law. I hold that it means that rule of action which necessarily arises out of the relation of reason to itself as its own end. And I hold that the first fact about man is his consciousness of the moral law, and of his obligation to obey it. But the very words "law" and obligation" "imply a penal

* "Endlich ist noch etwas in der Idee unserer praktischen Vernunft welches die Uebertretung eines sittlicher Gesetzes begleitet, nämlich ihre Strafwürdigkeit." *Kritik der Prak. Vernunft*, 1st Part, Book I. § 8.

sanction. The categorical imperative, "Thou oughtest," does not, and cannot mean, "Thou mayest, if thou wilt, and if thou dost not, thou wilt be none the worse." What it does mean is this: "That is right; it *should* be; it is unconditionally desirable; thou canst do it, and thou must: thus dictates the law of thy being, the law that thou art born under, which it is thy great good to obey, thy supreme evil to disobey." Such is the witness in ourselves. And its testimony is supremely rational. "Good doth follow unto all things by observing the course of their nature, and, on the contrary side, evil by not observing it. And is it possible that man, being not only the noblest creature in the world, but even a world in himself, his trangressing the law of his nature should draw no manner of harm after it? Yes: tribulation and anguish unto every soul that doeth evil." * So Hooker, who never wrote more judiciously. His argument does but formally justify a universal, an ineradicable feeling of humanity. The deep conviction that in moral evil must be sought the explanation of physical evil, is the common heritage of our race. That there is an inseparable connection between wrong-doing and punishment, is an organic instinct of conscience. And instinct—we may call it, with Kant, the Voice of God—never deceives. There is always a reality which corresponds with its antici-

* *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I. c. 9.

pation. What answers to the instinct of retributive justice is punishment. It is as real as the law. It is contained in the law. It is involved in the transgression. It is, in Hegel's phrase, "the other half of crime." The sanction implied in the moral law is the violent restoration of the moral order. Not that the violence is an end in itself, although it is a necessary accompaniment. Certain is it that pain quâ pain, like pleasure, quâ pleasure, is morally valueless, and cannot be the outcome of any ethical law, quâ ethical. As certain is it that punishment includes pain, in some sense.

Let us realise this. Punishment is not something arbitrary. Wrong-doing—called, variously, according to the point of view from which it is regarded, sin, crime, delict—is the assertion of a man's own particular self-will against the Universal Will, which is Supreme Reason, Supreme Right—for reason and right are synonymous. Penalty is the re-assertion of the Universal Will. It is not a wrong done to the criminal. It is a right done to him to redress his wrong—a right due to him as a *person*. It is a manifestation, an application, to him of that reason wherein he too consists, and which he has outraged. His compulsion is undone. He is restored to his right. The moral law must rule over all: over the good by their submission to its behests, over the evil by their endurance of its penalties. Justice is an absolute and aboriginal principle of it. And we shall find no better definition of justice than Ulpian's:

"The constant and perpetual will to render to every man his right." Punishment is the right of the wrong-doer. It is the application of justice to him. "It is," in St. Augustine's fine phrase, "the justice of the unjust." The wrong whereby he has transgressed the law of right has incurred a debt. Justice requires that the debt be paid, that the wrong be expiated.

Yes, *expiated*. This is the first object of punishment — to make satisfaction to outraged law. Nothing is more profoundly unphilosophical than the notion so dear to the sickly sentimentality of the day, that when a man ceases to do evil, a sponge is passed, so to speak, over the reckoning against him.

> "A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—
> 'Tis well for him; but when a sinful man
> Envying such slumber, may desire to put
> His guilt away, shall he return at once
> To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
> The fitting course for such; dark cells, dim lamps,
> A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm;
> No mossy pillow blue with violets!"

Profoundly true are these verses of Robert Browning. Similar is the teaching of Plato in the *Gorgias*, so strangely misapprehended by some of his modern interpreters, who have read him with the eyes of a nineteenth-century sentimentalist. "The doer of unjust actions is miserable in any case; more miserable, however, if he be not punished and does not meet with retribution, and

less miserable if he be punished, and meets with retribution at the hands of gods and men." The whole argument of Socrates in his famous passage is founded on the need of expiation. "The greatest of evils," he insists, "is for a guilty man to escape punishment:" for "he who is punished and suffers retribution, suffers justly; but justice is good: so that he who thus suffers, suffers what is good." St. Augustine has summed it up in four pregnant words: "Nulla pœna, quanta pœna!"

Such is the sanction of that moral law, which is the very *raison d'être* of government. Man, as man, has no claim upon my obedience. Only to the law of Right, speaking through human ministers, is my obedience due. And here is to be found the underlying principle which makes criminal justice just. The moral law apprehended, *not made*, by our practical reason, implies that right is rewarded and wrong punished. That, as we have seen, is involved in the very conception of law. Penal jurisprudence is simply a moral judgment exhibited in visible form. Thus Aquinas, with his usual clearness and precision: "The law of nature"—the law arising from that Divine Reason which is the nature of things—"proclaims that he who offends should be punished. But to define that this or that punishment should be inflicted upon him, is a determination drawn from the law of nature by human law."* And to the same

* *Summa*, 1, 2, q. 95, art. 2.

effect Butler: "Civil government being natural, the punishments of it are so too."*

This is the true philosophy of criminal law. In matter of fact, as Sir Henry Maine has pointed out, two great instincts lie at the root of it: to avenge and to deter. Both must be recognised and reckoned with. Resentment at wrong, desire of retribution upon the wrong-doer, are primordial principles as deeply implanted in our nature as pity or desire of self-preservation—implanted by the same Almighty hand, and as legitimate, nay, necessary. They are organic instincts, which we possess in common with the whole creation, groaning and travailing in pain together with us, in the struggle for existence, throughout nature's illimitable sphere of carnage and cruelty. But it is an essential condition of civilised human life that individual retaliation, sure to be cruel and excessive, should be superseded by the passionless punishment of law. The state is an ethical society, wherein the instinct of revenge is moralised: that is, removed from the domain of impulse to the domain of reason, elevated from the particular to the universal. It thus becomes, as retributive justice, an expression of the ethical might of the social organism: an attribute of Right, and the

* *Analogy*, Part I. c. 2.

bulwark of freedom. The primitive rule was the *lex talionis*. It was said by them of old time, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. And this was said, St. Augustine well points out, not to foster revenge, but to check it.* The natural tendency of the injured person is to do unto the offender as he has done, *and more also*. But, as St. Augustine goes on to remark, there is a vengeance which is just: "est quædam justa vindicta." Nor, let me observe in passing—to meet an obvious objection—is this just vengeance at variance with the spirit of Christianity. If ever any man had a right authoritatively to expound that spirit, it was the illustrious saint and doctor whom I have just quoted. The precepts of the *Sermon on the Mount* as to non-resistance of evil, as to the turning of the left cheek to the smiter of the right, naturally occur to the mind. I am far from saying that those elect souls who embrace counsels of perfection—who, in voluntary poverty, voluntary chastity, and voluntary obedience, lose their lives, and find them—may not give to these precepts literal obedience, if they are led to do so. But St. Augustine points out that the words of the Divine Master have reference rather to "the preparation of the heart," to the inward spirit of man, than to the outward act.† The supreme rule

* Contra Faustum, xix. 25.

† Ep. cxxxviii. 2.

is to return good for evil. Unwillingness to inflict pain may be a flagrant violation of that rule. The greatest good which can be rendered to the unjust is justice. Charity strictly requires us to render it. The principle of the *lex talionis* is justice, retributive justice. That principle is everlastingly true, even if, in our deeper apprehension of the sacredness of human personality, we put aside the cruder applications given to it by primitive jurisprudence. We no longer mutilate the thief, although there are cases in which it might, at first sight, seem not improper so to do. I remember one such in my experience as a magistrate in India. A man had cut off the two hands of a boy, three or four years old, in order to possess himself of the silver bangles which were soldered round the child's wrists. And when the poor little sufferer was brought into court, and held up his mutilated arms, and a thrill of sick horror ran through the building, I confess I for one regretted bitterly, for a moment, that the archaic rule could not be applied, at least in that case. Penal servitude for life seemed inadequate: and was. Pain, sharp pain, sharp and repeated, would assuredly have been a more fitting penalty. Unquestionably, in the existing criminal jurisprudence of the world, the element of physical suffering does not find sufficient place. There is a large class of crimes—assaults, especially of a lascivious character, upon women and children, and aggravated cruelty to animals, are instances of them—in the punish-

ment of which a liberal employment of the lash, or of some other instrument of corporal torture, is imperatively demanded by justice.

This by the way. My present point is, that whether we view the matter historically or philosophically, the punishment inflicted by human jurisprudence is, like all punishment, primarily vindictive. It is the legal consequence, united to the legal cause by a necessity arising from the nature of things. Crime, as the old Roman jurisconsults discerned, gives rise to a *vinculum juris* which punishment discharges. The *raison d'être* of the State is to unite men by a moral bond. And assuredly, in its highest function, the ministration of justice, it is not unmoral. The civil magistrate is the dispenser of righteous retribution, as the minister of God; "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," St. Paul teaches; the "wrath" being that which is *due* to the wrong-doer. "Punishment," says Kant, "must be justified as punishment: that is as mere evil for its own sake, so that the punished person, when he looks thereon, must himself confess that Right is done to him, and that his lot is entirely commensurate with his conduct."* The moral law, whether speaking through the still, small voice within, or with the tongue of a Judge from an external tribunal, merely shows to us our true

* *Kritik der Prak. Vernunft*, 1st Part, Book I. § 8.

selves, as Hamlet showed the unhappy Gertrude to herself. It mirrors us to consciousness. Punishment is the return of a man's deed upon himself. "Illo nocens se damnat quo peccat die," says the maxim of Roman jurisprudence. And again: "Ipse te pœnæ subdidisti." The magistrate does but pronounce the doom to which the wrong-doer has subjected himself by his own deed; the penalty which, by the eternal law of Right, whence human law derives its majesty, nay, its very life, is the proper complement of his crime.

The world's jurisprudence is the phenomenal expression of noumenal truth: the human interpretation of a divine ideal: imperfect at the best, but bound, as "the thoughts of men are widened," ever to approximate more nearly to that Absolute Standard of which it must ever fall short. It rests in the last resort upon that knowledge of right and wrong in the springs of action which is possessed by our self-judging moral understanding. It rests upon *conscience:* the voice of divine reason within us. The whole philosophy of relativity, in the sphere of ethics as elsewhere, is a blasphemy against reason. It is an attempt to derive morality from the unmoral. If our actions are the necessary outcome of molecular changes in the brain, of atomic movements of matter, it is an absurdity to talk of moral responsibility. If the difference

between good and bad is not absolute, it does not exist at all. You cannot get such a difference from the consequences. All materialistic explanations of moral approval and disapproval, of guilt, self-accusation, remorse, destroy the reality of them. Yes: and destroy the whole value of life, for the whole value of life is its ethical value. "If the rulers of the universe do not prefer the just man to the unjust," said Socrates, "it is better to die than to live." If righteousness is not the supreme law, existence is indeed a ridiculous tragedy. Materialism, in all its schools, reduces man from a person to a thing: for it denies to him that faculty of volition which is the essence of his personality: the condition of the attribute constituting him man. Volition and morality are indissolubly connected: their realm is one and the same. Man is volitional and ethical *quâ* man. The conception of him as a machine is irrational. *L'homme-machine*, I say, is nonsense, worthy of the buffoon who invented the phrase.

Moral action means the action of a self-conscious and self-determined being, and can mean nothing else. Kant has summed the matter up in a pregnant dictum: "Everything in nature acts according to laws: the distinction of a rational being is the faculty of acting according to the consciousness of laws." The supreme question at issue in the world of thought, in these days, is whether that faculty really exists. I say advisedly

"the supreme question." The very existence of morality depends upon it. For a plain man, Dr. Johnson's rough-and-ready way of settling it may well suffice: "Sir, we *know* that our will is free, and there's an end of it." But that the speculative difficulties which may be raised concerning this question are enormous, every tyro in metaphysics is aware. To enter into a detailed investigation of "that labyrinth of philosophy," as Leibnitz called it, would require a bulky volume. Its outlines, however, may be, and ought to be, here briefly indicated. For a statement of the creed of Determinism we cannot do better than go to the late Mr. John Stuart Mill. In his criticism of Sir William Hamilton he pronounces it "a truth of experience that volitions do, in point of fact, follow determinate moral antecedents with the *same uniformity* and with the *same certainty*, as physical effects follow their physical causes." And in the second volume of his *Logic* he writes as follows: "The doctrine called Philosophical Necessity is simply this: that, given the motives which are present to an individual's mind, and given likewise the character and disposition of the individual, the manner in which he will act may be unerringly inferred; that if we knew the person thoroughly, and knew all the inducements which are acting on him, we could foretell his conduct with as much certainty as we can predict any physical event." Now if this doctrine be true, it is obvious that there is no place in human life for

culpability and moral turpitude, in the old and only intelligible sense of the words. If a man's actions are absolutely determined by character and disposition—which Mr. Mill regarded as the outcome of heredity and environment—and by the pressure of passions and desires, then most assuredly he is not morally responsible for those actions. And the miserable people, of whom Dante tells us in the *Inferno*, are fully warranted when they blame, as the cause of their sufferings, everything except their abuse of their free personality, their own bad will: "when they blaspheme God and their progenitors and the whole race of men, the place, the time, the origin of their seed and of their birth." But no. It is not so. Psychological heredity is not uniform, is not absolute. The soul has an originating causality, and is the fount of duties and deserts, of guilt and punishment. Man is not the mere creature of circumstances, the predestined product of nature. Side by side with mechanical determination by empirical motives, there exists in him self-determination. He belongs—consciously belongs—to the sphere of reason as well as to the sphere of sense. And therefore he is the subject of moral obligation. We may, in some sort, admit that the character of a man at any moment determines his choice of motives: but he is largely determined as he determines himself. A man's character, I say, is not something imposed upon him from without, but something shaped, to a great extent, by himself

from within: and "a self-distinguishing and self-seeking consciousness" is its "basis."* He is, according to a wise Spanish proverb, "the son of his own deeds." "La liberté humaine," says Bossuet, "semble de sa nature indéterminée: elle se précise par l'action: en se précisant elle s'enveloppe et s'enchâine de ses actes, comme le ver-à-soie dans sa coque. Elle ne reste pas moins maîtresse de dénouer le lien qu'elle a noué: elle agit et réagit: elle soutient le choc et livre l'assaut." It is grandly said. And with the grandeur, not merely of rhetoric, but of truth. Aristotle teaches—and the teaching is by no means antiquated, although two thousand years old—that the rational nature supplies the rule of life, and that the law of habit provides for the attainment of facility in doing what reason requires. But habit is the outcome of volition; and for the freedom of man's volition it is enough to appeal—this is the justification of Dr. Johnson's dictum—to the categorical imperative of conscience. "I ought" implies "I can." The realisation of duty is impossible for any being which is not conceived as capable of self-determination. The speculative idea of freedom, like the speculative ideas of God and immortality, is practically warranted.

When, then, we affirm human freedom of action, we mean by it, action from a motive intelligible to,

* See T. H. Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Book II. c. 1.

and chosen by, a self-conscious moral being. A deed may be morally necessitated, and morally free. A good will—"the only thing which an unsophisticated man finds of absolute value in the world"—is a will self-determined by the moral law. Here is the supreme vindication of liberty. But a good will is not innate. It is acquired. It is the fruit of victory over the essentially base and ferocious promptings of self-love: over "the flesh with the affections and lusts." To keep in subjection the lower self, the self of the animal nature, and to emancipate the higher, the rational self: to rise from the subjective to the objective — this, I say, is the ethical freedom, which is our true end; and which we can work out, if we will. From this power of the will, springs that moral responsibility which supplies the *rationale* of criminal justice, and warrants its solemn ceremonial. This it is which compels us to account of guilt as something more than disease; of punishment as something more than discipline. This alone gives validity to the idea of Duty, as the paramount law of existence. Duty: it is the first word and the last; and the most precious.

"Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love,
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring and reprove:
Thou, who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
And calmest the weary strife of frail humanity!

"Stern Lawgiver! yet dost thou wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we any thing so fair
As is the smile upon thy face.
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh
and strong."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ETHICS OF POLITICS.

Is there a right and wrong in politics? What is the general faith of the age upon this question? It is an ancient doctrine, and a wholesome, that faith is best shown by works. Man acts because he believes. We should observe his deeds if we want to know his real convictions. Now is it too much to say that the popular conception of the public order is essentially mechanical? Mr. Carlyle, whom I must reckon among the seers of the century —few men have had so clear, so piercing a vision— tells us, "Love of country, in any high or generous sense, in any other than an almost animal sense, or mere habit, has little importance attached to it. . . . . Men are to be guided only by their self-interests. Good government is a good balancing of these, and, except a keen eye and appetite for self-interest, requires no virtue in any quarter. To both parties it is emphatically a machine; to the discontented 'a taxing machine,' to the contented 'a machine for securing property.' Nowhere is

the deep, almost exclusive faith we have in mechanism more visible than in the politics of this time."* But in mechanism there is no room for ethics. How can we predicate morality or immorality of a machine? And if from the general view thus expressed by Mr. Carlyle, we descend to particulars, we find abundant corroboration of it in every department of public life. Of international politics it is hardly necessary to speak. Is not the map of Europe covered with torn-up treaties? Let us look at domestic politics. How many statesmen, of recent times, could be mentioned, concerning whom we could ask even Jewish Apella—without unduly taxing his credulity—to believe that they are guided by ethical principles? that, however fine their phrases, they are animated by any other desire than the love of power and place?

I will take examples merely from English political life, which, perhaps, will compare favourably with the public life of any other country. An extremely thoughtful and interesting volume, by the late Mr. Bagehot, his *Biographical Studies*, supplies a very pregnant one. He is writing of Lord Lyndhurst, whom he inclines to consider, and I think with reason, a great political intellect—an intellect singularly well fitted for the perception of truth. But what can any impartial observer say of Lord Lyndhurst's career? It is absolutely im-

* *Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. ii. pp. 105—106.

possible, Mr. Bagehot justly observes, that he could have believed in Toryism, such as Toryism was in the second decade of this century, "the most stupid, narrow-minded, and suicidal policy which even the Tory Party has ever adopted." And yet he chose, deliberately chose, to connect himself with that policy, in 1818, when its evil effects were plainly visible; yes, and to become its strenuous advocate. But are we to accuse him of being false to his principles? By no means. We read in *As You Like It* of a certain knight that "swore by his honour they were good pancakes, and swore by his honour the mustard was nought." "Now I'll stand to it," says Touchstone, "the pancakes were nought and the mustard was good, and yet was not the knight forsworn, swearing by his honour, for he never had any; or if he had, he had sworn it away before he saw those pancakes and that mustard." The like may be affirmed of Lord Lyndhurst's principles. He did not act contrary to them, for he had none. Mr. Bagehot tells an amusing story of what he said as to the Act bearing his name, which forbids a widower to marry the deceased wife's sister. The real object of that enactment was to please certain particular people who had married their sisters-in-law, and as it stands to this day, it legalises all antecedent marriages. As it was originally brought in, it legalised subsequent marriages also. People conversant with the clergy and other strict people, represented to Lord Lynd-

hurst that there would be an outcry against this. He replied, "Put it the other way, then; forbid the future marriages. I am sure I don't care which way it is." "He wanted," is Mr. Bagehot's comment, "to serve a temporary purpose, and so he did always. He regarded politics as a game to be played, first for himself, and then for his party." How many men, prominent in English public life during the present century, I ask again, can be instanced, who did not so regard it? whose action has been determined, not by desire of power and place, but by considerations of right and wrong?

Can we suppose, for instance, that it was an ethical impulse which led the late Lord Derby to perform his celebrated feat of dishing the Whigs? Or are we to look upon Lord Beaconsfield, engaged in the long and painful process of "educating" the Conservative Party, as a moral teacher? And what can we say of Mr. Gladstone? Is it possible, if we judge Mr. Gladstone by ordinary standards, to find the smallest trace of ethical motive in his policy since 1885? He appeals to the country to give him a majority which shall enable him to outvote Conservatives and Home Rulers together, and to restore order and safety in Ireland. Failing to obtain such a majority, he coalesces with the Parnellites, and is prepared to hand over Ireland to them, as the price of regaining

power.* Of course we of "the classes" know that Mr. Gladstone must not be judged by ordinary standards. We know that, as Lord Macaulay testified half a century ago, his "disingenuousness" is "unconscious": that "he deludes first himself, and then his hearers": that his apparent tergiversations are merely psychological peculiarities. But "the masses" are not psychologists. And when we tell them that Mr. Gladstone follows his conscience, they incline to think that he follows it much as a man follows the horse which he drives. When we assure them that Mr. Gladstone is honourable and virtuous, they inquire what honour and virtue have to do with public life. And certainly if we

* It may be worth while, here, to recall certain words spoken by Mr. Gladstone at Edinburgh, on the eve of the General Election of 1885:—"Let me now suppose—for argument's sake I may suppose it possible—that the Liberal party might be returned to the coming Parliament—that is rather a staggering supposition, but I beg you to indulge me for an instant—might be returned to the coming Parliament in a minority, but in a minority which might become a majority by the aid of the Irish vote; and I will suppose that owing to some cause the present Government has disappeared, and a Liberal party was called to deal with this great constitutional question of the government of Ireland in a position where it was a minority dependent on the Irish vote for converting it into a majority. Now, gentlemen, I tell you seriously and solemnly, that though I believe the Liberal party to be honourable, patriotic, and trustworthy, in such a position as that it would not be safe for it to enter on the consideration of a measure in respect to which, at the first step of its progress, it would be in the power of a party coming from Ireland to say 'Unless you do this and unless you do that we will turn you out to-morrow.'"—*Times*, 10th November, 1885.

think of the elaborate misstatements of facts, the frantic appeals to the worst of popular passions, the scarcely veiled apologies for the basest and most cowardly crimes, which have been such prominent features of recent political oratory in this country, the question is naturally suggested whether ethics have any place at all in politics.

An English diplomatist, holding a very important position, shall help us to answer that question. On the 9th of November, 1888, Lord Lytton, upon his installation as Rector of Glasgow University, delivered an address "On the morality proper to the conduct of nations, as compared with individuals, in their relations with each other." Lord Lytton, I take it, did not profess to speak as a philosopher. And that renders him peculiarly valuable as a witness for my purpose. He is a brilliant *littérateur* and an accomplished man of the world. He is therefore a fitting exponent of popular feeling. His object, he told his audience, was to contribute, if possible, toward the discussion of the question, Is morality the same for nations as for individuals? It is not necessary to follow his extremely discursive argument, which extended through three closely-printed columns of the *Times*. I will here merely state his conclusions, which are these: that public morals are a branch rather of prudence than of morals, properly so called, "because there is no sanction of public morality."

"A law which does not coerce, is not a law at all. It is at best a counsel or advice. The same is true of moral rules, when the breach of them is not followed by public ill-will or private remorse." Remarking, in passing, upon the curious significance of the doctrine, that the morality of an ethical rule lies in the public ill-will or private remorse thereby excited, let me note Lord Lytton's admission that "individuals concerned in the conduct of public affairs are subject to the same moral duties to each other which regulate the conduct of private affairs. But," he adds, "of the classes of obligations which constitute private morals, only one, namely justice, has a place in public morals at all. And the sort of justice which finds place in public morals is totally different from the justice which relates to individuals; it consists mainly in moderation and kindly prudence." Such is the guidance which the newly-elected Rector of the University of Glasgow offered to its students on this weighty matter, amid "the loud applause and aves vehement" of his hearers, and—unless my memory is at fault—with the "Macte virtute esto" of the newspapers generally. It would be interesting to know what Principal Caird, who was in the chair, thought of it. Without, however, speculating on that subject, let us observe that Lord Lytton answers with an unqualified negative the question which he proposes. Morality, he holds, is *not* the same for nations as for individuals. It has no

application to nations save in the form of justice. And justice in the public order means something quite different from what it means in private life. Justice—which Aristotle considered to embrace all virtue—means for nations merely "moderation and kindly prudence." It is true that Lord Lytton is speaking primarily of international relations. But the principles which he lays down are general, and apply to the public order in all respects. The difference between nations and individuals is, he holds, so great—this is the foundation of his whole argument—that the same rules of morality are inapplicable to both. Public morality he considers a branch of prudence. But what does this really mean?

What, if we examine it closely, does this prudential rule of right and wrong in politics amount to? Is it, in the long run, anything else than respect for force? It is the teaching of Hobbes, that right and wrong, justice and injustice, are purely relative; that these bonds, as he calls them, "have their strength, not from their own nature, but from the fear of evil consequences upon their rupture." Such, too, was the doctrine of the first Napoleon: "On ne peut agir sur les peuples très civilisés, ni par les sentiments généreux, qui se perdent avec la religion et la morale publique, ni par les illusions que les lumières dissipent; ils ne sauraient être gouvernés que par une autorité dont la force est évidente et présente." And his practical conclusion

was, "With the armies of France at my back, I shall be always in the right." He respected nothing but material force. That, for him, was the supreme authority. The notion of public virtues and of public crimes had no place in his mind. What were called such, were to him merely facts, governed by physical laws, and absolutely void of ethical significance. And here he is the true type of the century. Respect for "established facts"—that is the favourite phrase—without the least regard to their moral aspect, is precisely one of the most notable signs of the times. Whence do our public men, in democratic countries—and all countries are becoming democratic—profess to derive their rules of conduct? From what is called public opinion. And what is an appeal to public opinion but an appeal to force? In a democratic country power is split into a vast number of pieces. The practical result of universal suffrage is that the politician who most successfully manipulates the machine, gathers into his own hands the greatest number of pieces. The sovereignty of the masses—not the sovereignty of the people, which is a very different thing—represents in the public order exactly the same principle as Cæsarism; the domination of material force, not of the moral idea. The special kind of force now dominant is the force of numbers, disguised as public opinion. The political faith of the day is that what the numerical majority—miscalled the people—wills is just; that

it is possible to determine what is right and wrong in the public order by counting heads. That is the ultimate principle of public action ever more and more widely accepted, and the practical result of it is, in Plato's phrase, "to make of justice the interest of the stronger." No absolute rule of right and wrong is admitted. All is relative. No homage is paid to social truths and principles, eternal, immutable, paramount, against which the voice of the largest and loudest multitude should be powerless. I think it was Goethe — or was it Heine?—who represented the first Napoleon as saying to the French nation, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." That is precisely the claim which is now made on behalf of "the people." "Political philosophy," the late M. Gambetta insisted in a famous speech, "demands that the people be considered as the exclusive, the perennial source of all powers, of all rights. The will of the people must have the last word. All must bow before it." This doctrine, that the ever-shifting will of the masses is the very source and fount of right, of law, of justice, is the expression, in the public order, of the philosophy of relativity.

And here, as in every other sphere, the effect of that philosophy is to derationalise, to demoralise, to dissolve, and to destroy. I do not use these words at random. It derationalises, for it is fatal to the belief that reason pervades the universe; reason means something self-identical and inde-

pendent. It demoralises, for morality, if not absolute, is nothing. It dissolves, for the bonds of society are ethical. It destroys, for if those bonds are loosed, fall the social system must. Right and wrong the product of ballot boxes! The infallibility of public opinion! "Vox populi, Vox Dei!" What theses! "To worship force," Dr. Arnold well observed, "is devil-worship." And the brute force of numbers, blinded by ignorance and maddened by passion—surely it is a very poor kind of devil. Is any lower form of idolatry conceivable? I, for my part, say with Quinet: "M'agenouiller devant celui qui est à deux genoux devant toute force triomphante! Ramper devant cette bête rampante aux milliards de pieds! Ce n'est pas là ma foi. Que ferai-je de ce dieu-là? O le curieux fétiche! Je l'ai vu de trop près." No. If I am to have a god at all, it must be a very different sort of deity from that. If I am to hold any conceptions of right and wrong, they must come to me from quite another source. I will endeavour to indicate a more excellent way.

The whole question turns upon this: Is there an absolute standard of right and wrong ruling throughout the universe? I have sought to show, in an earlier portion of this work, that there is. The immutably true in morals is that which is in harmony with the faculties proper to man, the

faculties which he has in common with the lower animals being held in subjection. Hence the old Stoic formula, "to live according to reason"—and the world is not likely to get beyond it—to let reason, not passion, rule our lives. And it applies to every department of human life, to every sphere of human activity, to the aggregate of men which we call a nation, as to the individual persons constituting that aggregate. Civilisation is first and before all things ethical. Not literature, not art, not science, not commerce and manufactures, not the soldier and the policeman, but morality, is its foundation. Truth and right are the very breath of life to states, as to individual men. "The moral laws of nature" are the moral laws of nations too. Law is the principle of obligation. What is the primordial law? What is the universal principle of obligation? I say it is to follow that which reason, speaking through conscience, dictates as right. This is the one true rule of public as of private life. Let us consider it a little.

Why and how far ought I to obey the laws of the civil society, the nation, of which I am a member? To answer this question we must ask another. What is the true end of civil society? We cannot reply better than in the words of Aristotle: "Not merely existence, but worthy existence, is the end of civil society." Worthy or noble existence. An existence which permits each man to be as fully himself as possible, or, in Spinoza's words, to de-

velop in security soul and body and to make free use of his reason. A man is a person, not a thing. "The sacred distinction between person and thing," Coleridge well observes, "is the light and life of all law, human and divine." Here, as everywhere else, we are thrown back upon the elemental fact of human personality, which is the primordial source of the rights realised in civil polity. The office of positive law is to guard those rights. It is the rule of reciprocal liberty, the tutor of the natural rights of the individual which are the rule of his liberty, The idea of personality is limited by the idea of solidarity. In the true social theory these ideas are reconciled, not abolished. But as Professor Green excellently says, "all rights are relative to moral ends or duties." The claim or right of the individual to have certain powers secured to him by society, and the counter claim of society to exercise certain powers over individuals, alike rest on the fact that these powers are necessary to the fulfilment of man's vocation as a moral being, to an effective self-devotion to the work of developing the perfect character in himself and others. Therefore, it is not too much to assert that politics ought to be conceived of as a branch of ethics. "The discussion of virtue is the province of political science," writes the greatest master of that science the world has ever seen. The end of the social organism, like the end of the individual organism, is freedom. And the only instrument of freedom is the moral law.

Kant maintained the absolute identity of the two terms, liberty and morality; and we may accept that doctrine in the widest sense. Justice should rule alike in the actions of the individual man, and of the aggregate of individual men which we call a nation. The public conscience should dominate customs, legislation, diplomacy, just as the personal conscience should dominate the thoughts, words, and works of every man. *Pace* Lord Lytton, there are not two kinds of justice; there is only one kind. Nor is justice in the public order merely "moderation and kindly prudence." There is one law of Right ruling throughout the universe, absolute, eternal, unchangeable. In obedience to it alone is liberty. To resist it is to fight against the nature of things, and that is certain defeat and captivity. "The sensual and the dark rebel in vain; slaves by their own compulsion."

Here, then, is the true ground why the laws of the civil society in which I live have a rightful claim on my obedience. The ideal of the State is that it should be "the passionless expression of general right." And if this is so, the limit of the claim of the State to my obedience is clear also. The organ of the moral law, speaking to me directly and categorically, is conscience. The first principle of a man's ethical life is "to reverence his conscience as his king." If the law formulated by the com-

munity conflicts with the law within, it must be disobeyed, except indeed when the maxim "De minimis non curat lex," applies. For that law which is not guided by reason, is, as Aquinas expresses it, "rather an iniquity than a law." Law in ethics—in physics the word has another meaning—prescribes what ought to be done. Now there is only one *ought*. Speaking generally, it may be said that a bad law should be obeyed, unless it conflicts with those dictates of conscience which a man must follow under pain of grievous injury to his ethical life. It is "great harm to disobey, seeing obedience is the bond of rule;" the condition of the existence of the social organism. But the end of that organism is the moral perfection of the individual. And no one is bound to obey a law which involves the sacrifice of his moral perfection. "Whether it be better in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," said St. Peter and St. John to the rulers of the people who commanded them "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." And so Antigone, in the noblest utterance, perhaps, of Greek tragedy, when confronted with Kreon for disobeying his decree:

> "It was not Zeus who heralded these words,
> Nor Justice, helpmeet of the Gods below.
> 'Twas they who ratified those other laws,
> And set their record in the human heart.
> Nor do I deem thy heraldings so mighty,
> That thou, a mortal man, couldst trample on

> The unwritten and unchanging laws of heaven.
> They are not of to-day, or yesterday,
> But ever live, and no one knows their birth-tide,
> These for the dread of any human anger,
> I was not minded to annul and so
> Incur the punishment that heaven exacts."*

I say, then, that at the root of the laws of a nation lies conscience. They are judgments of right and wrong. They are essentially derivative. They owe their majesty, their life, to the eternal truths of morals, of which they are the transient settings. They are, as Plato, taught, adaptations to social wants of that Universal Reason, which is the Supreme Rule of Ethics: supreme over nations, as over the individuals of whom nations are composed: and no more to be violated by nations than by individuals without incurring the retribution which is "the other half of crime"; its natural and necessary complement. St. Paul, upon a certain memorable occasion, reasoned before the trembling Roman governor of "righteousness, temperance—and judgment to come." The judgment *does* come. "Rarely," sings the Latin poet, "has punishment lost sight of the criminal, slow though her foot be." Rarely? Never. Dark as are the ways of that Eternal Justice which rules the world, we can see enough of them to be sure of that. And the longer the penalty is deferred, the

* *Antigone*, v. 448-458. I need hardly observe how inadequately the power and beauty of the original are represented by this translation of Dr. Donaldson's, excellent as it is.

worse for the people which has to pay it; for it accumulates at compound interest. Examples? Why history is full of them. Consider Spain, once the first of Christian nations, and now the lowest. Why? Look at the Spanish Inquisition, said Montalembert, and you have the answer. For more than three centuries the Inquisition had been the scourge of Spain, and at the same time the object of the just horror of the Christian world — of France, of Belgium, and of Catholic Germany, no less than of all Protestant nations. The soul of Spain was petrified in the bloody hands of Philip II.; *autos da fé* made an end of it. Vengeance had not long to wait. One hundred years after the accession of Charles V., the Duke d'Olivarez, first minister and chief favourite of Philip IV., wrote to the Infant Cardinal who governed Belgium on behalf of Spain: "My Lord, there are no more men. There are really no more. We have sought everywhere and have found none." No more men! The manhood of this noble people extinct! Or look at France, with its prevailing atheism decreeing injustice as a law; its domestic virtue sapped by its popular literature of lubricity; its high places the prey of the most ignoble demagogues; all classes in antagonism; all social bands loosened; popular passions—"passions de la cervelle et de l'estomac"—the only effective power left. That is the practical consequence of the substitution of the gospel of Jean-Jacques Rousseau for the gospel of Jesus

Christ; of the elevation of concupiscence—aptly symbolised by the Goddess of Reason—into the place of conscience; of the "dumb-buzzard idol" Man in the abstract, and his sophistical "rights," into the place of the living God and the duties binding us to Him. Or England; alas! can any man whose moral sense is not hopelessly blunted, doubt that she will have to pay, to the uttermost farthing, the penalty of her centuries of tyrannical oppression and remorseless cruelty in Ireland? Has not the reckoning already begun? And who can predict where it will end? Yes. Well did our Elizabethan poet write:

> "Stern and imperious Nemesis!
> Daughter of Justice most severe,
> Thou art the world's great arbitress,
> And queen of causes reigning here,
> Whose swift, sure hand is ever near."

So much must suffice on this great topic. To many, I fear, my words will seem mere midsummer madness. I am profoundly convinced that unless philosophy is a dream, and history a lie, they are the words of truth and soberness. And, I venture to say, the more they are pondered by men of good will, the better for them and for the age in which we live. It was well observed by one of these, the late Frederick Denison Maurice: "The moralist never maintains his own position so well as when he asserts the highest dignity for the politician. The separation between the two has been an intolerable mischief."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM.

HALF a century ago a brilliant French writer, now perhaps as much underrated as then overvalued, warned the world: "Europe is hastening toward Democracy; the symptoms of the social transformation abound; the ancient society is perishing with the social order out of which it has come." Time has amply justified these words of Chateaubriand. Democracy is the dominant fact of modern civilisation, all-invading, all-penetrating, remaking the nations by equality of rights and the power of numbers. There are, of course, different types of Democracy,* the difference being due, chiefly, to national temperament and national history. But whatever the varieties of its form, it everywhere means the advent of the masses to political power. To the decision of the numerical majority is the ultimate appeal, whether that appeal be made directly, by *plébiscite* or *referendum*, or indirectly, by means of a general election. Demos is king. How will he rule? "Power which

* I have treated this subject at some length in chap. vi. of *A Century of Revolution.*

wisdom does not guide, falls, overweighted, in ruin to the ground," the Roman poet warns us—"Vis consilî expers mole ruit sua." Who shall teach the sovereign people in the way of wisdom? Who shall lead it in right paths?

It is hardly necessary to enlarge upon the many-headed ruler's need of such teaching, such leading. What can the average voter, his life probably spent in manual toil, know, by his own research and meditation, concerning the vast social and political questions which he is called to decide? "Most men," Napoleon judged, "are grown-up children." "One or two rules," says Locke, "upon which their conclusions depend, in most men have governed all their thoughts. Take these away from them, and their understanding is completely at a nonplus." But manifestly those rules do not extend to complicated and far-reaching issues of legislation and diplomacy. Let us cheerfully admit that the majority of men apply a fair amount of good sense and right motive to the business of the world; nay, that mankind, as a whole, makes proof of virtues over and above those "essential for digesting victuals," and merits a certain amount of admiration; let us, if you like, agree with Mr. Gladstone—although the phrase is redolent of claptrap—that "trust of the people, tempered by prudence," is the principle which should guide the statesman. Still it remains that the appeal to the masses on grave political questions is, and must be,

an appeal to "the yea and no of general ignorance." The science of politics, to say the least, is as difficult a branch of learning as the science of anatomy. It demands special study, and the mental discipline and leisure necessary for special study. There is no problem of internal administration, of foreign policy, which can be even so much as intelligently appreciated without a considerable knowledge of history and political philosophy. It is impossible for the numerical majority, in any country, to comprehend, by their own wit and labour, the elements of those problems. They are like that eunuch of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, whom Philip the Deacon heard read in his chariot the Prophet Isaias, and asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" and he said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" How indeed! But who shall guide the sovereign people to understand matters of State, beside which even the utterances of the evangelical prophet are plain and simple?

The newspaper press undertakes that office. Our journals are the guides, philosophers, and friends of the masses, teaching them what they suppose themselves to think on well-nigh all subjects. For the great majority of men, I say, their newspapers —they seldom read anything else—are the direct sources of those floating opinions which have drifted into their minds, whereby they judge all social and political problems. Our journalists have succeeded

to an important portion of the functions which in past days were discharged by the clergy. Now, the preacher is generally required to restrict his teaching to matters of religion. The pulpit has been obliged to resign to the press the instruction of the people in secular affairs. Mr. Carlyle well puts it: "The true Church of England, at this moment, lies in the Editors of its Newspapers. These preach to the people daily, weekly; admonishing kings themselves, advising peace or war with an authority which only the first Reformers, and a long-past class of Popes were possessed of; inflicting moral censure, imparting moral encouragement, in all ways diligently administering the Discipline of the Church." * A weighty function, truly, and of the utmost moment to the interests of society; the august function which in the old Jewish theocracy was performed by the prophets. Let us consider it a little from an ethical point of view. What are the rights and duties appertaining to it?

The rights of the journalist may be shortly summed up in the familiar phrase, "the liberty of the press." He may properly claim full freedom—"as large a charter as the wind." "By liberty of the press," said Mr. Justice Fitzgerald, "I mean complete freedom to write and publish, without censorship and without restriction, save

* *Miscellanies*, vol. ii. p. 114.

such as is absolutely necessary for the preservation of society." Censorship is, indeed, as antiquated as mail-armour. That "liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely, according to conscience," which Milton prized "above all liberties," is an assured conquest of the modern mind; its only restriction, as Mr. Justice Fitzgerald indicates, "such as is absolutely necessary for the preservation of society." And to that restriction who can take exception? Is it possible rationally to claim for every man a liberty of printing *everything* that he likes, not merely "according to conscience," but according to passion—everything, however obscene, seditious, libellous? That is the liberty to which the late Pope assigned a place in his *Syllabus Errorum* — List or Catalogue of Errors; that "plena potestas omnibus attributa quaslibet opiniones cogitationesque palam publiceque manifestandi"—the liberty claimed for every one to declare openly and publicly any opinions and thoughts whatever. Cardinal Newman has well observed that it seems a light epithet to call such a doctrine a *deliramentum;* that "of all conceivable absurdities it is the wildest and most stupid." "Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines." Liberty of the press, like all liberties, is grounded in that faculty of reason whence springs free agency. It is essentially ethical. Law is the inseparable condition of its right use. It is perhaps necessary to insist upon this. For to many well-

meaning people the printing press is a sort of fetich. The printing press is really no more than an admirable mechanical invention for propagating speech and writing. The fact that a man employs it, does not in the least relieve him from the duties and responsibilities attending the communication of thought. On the contrary, the vast reverberation which he thus obtains, makes those duties and responsibilities all the more onerous. The journalist is just as much under the moral law in the exercise of his profession, as in the most personal actions of private life. Surely so much is clear. The liberty of the press, like all liberty, means action within the great principles of ethics, not emancipation from them.

Such is the true conception of the liberty of the press, well reckoned by Junius "the palladium of all civil, political, and religious rights," the chief bulwark of all liberty. Journalism should be the principal instrument of publicity, that greatest terror to evil-doers; the most energetic mode of resistance to tyranny, because its protest is perpetual; the most noble, because its force lies in the moral consciousness of men; and therefore the most effective auxiliary of truth and justice. It would be easy to accumulate the words of the wise in this sense. But it is hardly necessary. The matter is too plain. There is, however, a fine passage in a great speech made by an illustrious advocate, upon a memorable occasion, which admirably states the true basis of

the liberty of the press, and which, for a special reason, I shall cite.

"Every man," said Erskine in his argument at the trial of Paine, "not intending to mislead, but seeking to enlighten others with what his own reason and conscience, however erroneously, have dictated to him as truth, may address himself to the universal intelligence of a whole nation, either upon the subject of governments in general, or upon that of his own individual country. He may analyse the principles of its constitution, point out its errors and defects, examine and publish its corruptions, warn his fellow-citizens against their ruinous consequences, and exert his whole faculties in pointing out the most advantageous changes in establishments which he considers to be radically defective or sliding from their object by abuse. All this every subject of this country has a right to do, if he contemplates only what he thinks would be for its advantage, and but seeks to change the public mind by the conviction which flows from reasonings dictated by conscience."

This, then, is the liberty which the journalist may rightly claim: liberty to state facts, liberty to argue upon them, liberty to denounce abuses, liberty to advocate reforms. This is his right. What is the corresponding duty? It is clearly indicated in Lord Erskine's words: "Every man seeking to enlighten others with what his own reason and conscience have dictated to him as truth." What the journalist owes to his readers is truth. Veracity is the very law of his action. Milton, in his noble *Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, observes: "When a man writes to the world, he summons up all his reason and deliberation to assist him; he searches, meditates, is industrious, and likely consults and confers with his

judicious friends; after all which done, he takes himself to be informed in what he writes as well as any that wrote before him." Those who "write to the world" in the newspapers cannot, indeed, by any possibility, proceed after this leisurely fashion. The work of the journalist is usually done in hot haste, and is essentially ephemeral. I remember not long ago complimenting a young Oxford man upon a very brilliant leader in one of the London daily papers. He modestly acknowledged my eulogy of his article, and added plaintively, "But to think that twenty-four hours is its term of life!" Twenty-four hours! I thought; you flatter yourself. It will be forgotten in a quarter of that time. "Here lies one whose name was writ in water," was the epitaph which poor Keats commanded for his tomb. He was wrong. "Ære perennius" would have been more appropriate. But of the journalist it may with truth be said that he writes in water. However judicious, however eloquent, however piquant his composition, it is at once swallowed up by envious oblivion. It produces its impression instantaneously. It is like a note of music, heard and gone forever. And the successful journalist is he who, consciously or unconsciously, realises this. To avail himself adroitly of the passing moment is the secret of his trade. Yes, he writes in water. Acute observation, literary skill, learning, art, science, virtue avail him not. His creation fades away suddenly like the grass. In the morning

it is green and groweth up. In the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered. Such are the conditions under which his work is done. It is extemporaneous. It cannot, in the great majority of cases, be the result of prolonged examination of the special question with which it deals. But it may, at all events, be honest. Accurately to state the facts, fairly to comment upon them, correctly to sum them up, and candidly to indicate the conclusions to which they point—such, surely, is the ethical obligation laid upon the newspaper publicist. The masses who look to him for guidance have a right to expect so much from him. "Man consists in truth," says Novalis. The journalist, of all men, should consist in truth.

This, then, is the journalist's vocation in ideal. What is it in fact? I wonder to how many newspaper writers it ever so much as occurs that they are morally responsible for what they write? Certainly there are many who, however sensitive to the obligations of veracity in the private relations of life, do not apparently suspect that it continues to claim their allegiance when they exercise their profession. I suppose I should not greatly err if I said that truth is, as a rule, the last thing which the average journalist thinks about, as he girds himself up to the delivery of his daily burden. It is a dictum of Cudworth's, "Truth is the most

unbending and uncompliable, the most firm and adamantine thing in the world." The mere adjectives would, in most cases, suffice to make the able editor, or the nimble leader-writer, drop his pen. He prefers the teaching of Mr. Herbert Spencer, that "What we call truth is simply the correspondence of subjective to objective relations:" * and he betters the instruction. The manipulation of relations is the business of his life. It is merely with "relative realities" that he is concerned; and the relative is flexible, pliable, shifting, and dissolvent. I confess the more I see of the London journals, which I suppose will compare favourably with any other, the more clearly does it seem to me that their writers are, for the most part, dominated —consciously or unconsciously—by the philosophy of Balzac's Vautrin: "There are no such things as principles, there are only events; there are no such things as laws, there are only circumstances. A wise man embraces events and circumstances to shape them to his own ends." Such are, in most cases, the ethics of journalism. I say "in most cases." That it is not always so I cheerfully admit. There are British journalists—it is my privilege to count such among my own friends—whose loyalty to principle is unquestionable, whose veracity is unimpeachable, whose motives, whether we agree with their views or not, are beyond suspicion. Yes, they exist, unsubmerged in that bad element;

* *First Principles*, § 25.

"rari nantes in gurgite vasto." All honour to those strong swimmers. Of American journalism I know little. But the testimony which reaches me regarding it is not reassuring. Thus, a few years ago, I find a reverend orator of note declaring to a church congress in Boston: "The easy flow of the magnificent mendacity of the average partisan editor in America makes me ashamed every time I open a newspaper. There is nothing that can equal it, in any way, in its almost admirable capacity for downright lying." The amusing author known as Max O'Rell writes: "American journalism is above all sensational journalism. If the facts reported are exact, so much the better for the paper; if not, so much the worse for the facts. Beyond the date few statements are reliable. But the papers are always lively reading." I cannot, myself, undertake to say how far this witness is true. Of the journalism of continental Europe I can speak with more knowledge. And concerning it assuredly even worse must be said. Consider, for example, the organs of what is called in France "free thought"—*la libre pensée*. Why it is so called I do not know, for instead of thought I find only shibboleths and sophisms; instead of freedom, bondage to the basest passions. The attacks on religion and morals which fill the columns of these newspapers, and apparently supply their *raison d'être*, are usually made with insults, rather than with anything which can even by courtesy be

termed arguments. "Calomniez et il en restera toujours quelque chose," seems to be the law of their working. And what shall we say of the so-called religious press? I take leave to say that more harm to religion has been done by a certain section of it than by its opponents. I speak of that species of journalism of which the late M. Louis Veuillot was the supreme type in his time. I make no question of the entire goodness of that pungent writer's motives. I am quite sure of the superlative badness of his methods. The wisdom that is from above, a high authority tells us, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. The wisdom which guided M. Louis Veuillot's pen was first foul, then truculent, blatant, and insolent, full of malignity and evil fruits, and seems to have come from the gutters of Paris. His articles were a tissue of maledictions and anathemas, resembling the curse of Ernulphus; a never-ceasing rain of insult upon just and unjust; upon the noblest and best of his own communion — men like Montalembert and Falloux, Dupanloup and Lacordaire, Ozanam and Gratry,—no less than upon Garibaldians and Communists. His reckless indifference to truth bordered on the sublime. I know of no more complete example than that which his journal presented, of the divorce between religion and ethics. He sowed the wind, and Catholics in France have reaped the whirlwind, abundantly.

An eminent French writer has observed that the two most distinctive "notes" of our great cities are the corruption of the flesh and the corruption of the intellect. Facts too amply bear out his judgment. The vastness of such places as London, Paris, Berlin, New York affords a cloak, which is wanting in the greater number of provincial towns, for the deliberate and habitual infraction of those precepts of the moral law that have reference to the virtue of purity. Systematic, organised unchastity is especially the sin of great cities. And what this vice is in its own sphere, the vice of mendacity is in another range, as striking at the very root of intellectual soundness, as being, in the words of the Council of Trent, "a disease of the mind, generally incurable." Now it cannot be doubted that journalism is conducted under conditions which tend to nourish this vice. The newspaper is, by its very nature, an ephemeral production, read for an hour and then cast aside, and probably never looked at again. Its assertions have done their work before an opportunity of correcting them is presented. Besides, it rests with editors whether contradictions of false and misleading allegations, which their journals may contain, shall appear in them or not. And it is manifest to all men that the considerations by which this question is determined are, in a vast majority of instances, wholly unethical. Again, the conditions under which the newspaper publicist works are extremely unfavourable to the cultivation

of the virtue of veracity. He is called upon suddenly to expound views which shall strike his readers as profound, well-considered, or original, about subjects of which, very likely, he knows nothing truly or exactly. Or he is summoned to essay the defence of "principles" to which he is wholly indifferent. Or he is bidden to attack some institution, some interest, some work, which whatever there may be of good left in him confesses to be worthy of respect and support. A very few years' practice in a calling of this kind is apt to render him as indifferent to the goal whither his pen conducts him, as is a cab-horse to the destination whither the driver's "fare" is conveyed. And the worst of it is that, in time, he comes to glory in his shame. Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, distinguishes between two kinds of liars; there is "the liar who loves a lie for its own sake," and "the liar who lies to win reputation or to make money." But many a journalist who, at first, belongs to the latter of these classes, and is perhaps a little ashamed, for a while, at finding himself there, passes pretty swiftly into the former. Thus does he anticipate, in this life, the doom which Dante ascribes to the damned; he is in the miserable estate of those "genti dolorose" who have lost "il ben del intelletto." And then, by a fatal and necessary law, his chief object, next to the provision of the means of "agreeable feeling" for himself, is to bring down as many as possible to his

own level. Nor does he find any surer way of effecting this, than by the persistent denial of those moral excellences which he has ceased to strive after, or even to venerate. Is a man the object of reverence and admiration, for patriotism, philanthropy, piety? Your newspaper censors, with due protestations of hatred of hypocrisy, will strip off the veneer which imposes on the unsuspicious; will show their readers that these pretended virtues are a mere cloak for some base or sordid end; will demonstrate conclusively that "old Cato is as great a rogue as you." And their efforts are only too successful. I think I may truly say that the newspaper press, during the last quarter of a century, has done more than anything else to de-ethicise public life; to lay the axe to the root of duty, self-devotion, self-sacrifice, the elements of the moral greatness of a nation, which is its true greatness. Such is the practical working of the philosophy of relativity in the sphere of journalism.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ETHICS OF PROPERTY.

MUCH has been written lately on capital and labour; on the great question between "the Haves" and "the Have-nots," which underlies all social and political issues. In this chapter I shall approach that question from a point of view usually lost sight of, or ignored. A considerable number of contributions to its discussion lies before me, as I write; publications, in various languages, and of all sorts and kinds: from the folio to the fly-sheet; from the reasoned treatise to the rhetorical tract. As I turn them over, I find invocations of selfishness and of sentiment; pleas on behalf of civilisation and on behalf of our common humanity; appeals to acts of the legislature and to the teachings of political economy. To all the considerations thus urged, I cheerfully allow due weight. Both selfishness and sentiment must be reckoned with, as permanent factors in our nature. True it is that doctrines incompatible with the fair order of civilised life are self-condemned.

As true is it, that the common good of all mankind is an end which we are ever bound to keep in view. "Some reverence for the laws ourselves have made" is an essential condition of the political freedom which we all prize so highly. Political economy cannot be put aside with a Carlylean anathema as "the dismal science," although perhaps more sad nonsense has been talked about it, during the present century, than about any other subject, with the possible exception of sanitation. But none of these things goes to the root of the matter. The first fact about man, as we have learnt from Aristotle, is that he is a moral being, having perception of right and wrong, justice and injustice. "The law of conscience," echoes the great English philosopher of the last century, "is the law which we are born under." The moral law is the rule of economics, the life of legislation, the tutor of philanthropy, the foundation of civilisation, the discipline of sentiment, and the curb of selfishness. These are not the flourishes of rhetoric. They are the words of truth and soberness. The moral law, as I claim to have shown in previous chapters, is Supreme Reason ruling over all intelligent existence throughout the universe, either by its mandates or by its penalties; sovereign over society, as over the individuals of whom society is composed; to obey it, the great good of nations as of men; to violate it, the chief evil. If the moral law is this—and if it

is not this, it is nothing—to it, in the last instance, must the appeal be made, in the great controversy concerning property now agitating the world. Why not appeal to it in the first instance?

As a matter of fact, the disputants on this momentous question very seldom do so appeal, either primarily or ultimately.

> "Vom Rechte, das mit uns geboren ist,
> Vom dem, ist, leider! nie die Frage."

I doubt much whether, in the mass of printed matter concerning it, which I have now before me, there is any attempt to discuss it, seriously, as an ethical question. It is truly observed by Mazzini, "The merely analytic and negative philosophy of the last century has instilled materialism into our daily practical life, into our habits of thought, our methods of viewing all human things. God is not in the heart of the century." Practical atheism is quite compatible with a sincere profession of Christianity. And there is no more significant manifestation of it than the widely spread disbelief in the eternal difference between moral good and moral evil; in the existence of a nature of things which is ethical, and from which rights and duties spring; and in the power of human reason to ascertain and formulate those rights and those duties. Such appears, indeed, to me, the worst kind of atheism; for it means not the rejection of this or that formula, in which the theistic idea has found expression, necessarily imperfect, but

the non-recognition of the moral law in which the theistic idea is rooted; which necessarily leads up to the Divine concept; which finds in God and immortality its final end and its crown. I will take an illustration of what I am saying from Professor Jevons' well-known work, *The State in Relation to Labour*. "The first step," the professor postulates, "must be to rid our minds of the idea that there are any such things in social matters as abstract rights." I do not hesitate to affirm, on the contrary, that the first step is clearly to apprehend that man's natural rights exist; and that the second is to discern clearly what those rights are and how they are conditioned; to which I may add, that the third step is to remember that political science deals with the living, the complex, the contingent; that its work is not to play with abstractions, nor to balance probabilities. Let me apply these rules to the topic before us—the Ethics of Property.

The first question, then, is whether there is such a thing as a "natural right" to private property. Now the word "nature" may mean either that which is, or that which ought to be. Taking it in the first of these senses, we must maintain with Mr. Herbert Spencer, that a desire for property is one of the elements of man's nature. Nay, we may observe the germs of it in animals inferior to man

in the scale of being. Every one has seen the attempts at appropriating, and subduing to themselves, the unconscious, made by beavers, wasps, ants, and birds. My dog has a keen sense of proprietorship in the basket which is his sitting room by day, and his bed by night. We may safely assent to Mr. Spencer's argument that "if a propensity to personal acquisition be really a component of man's constitution, then that cannot be a right form of society which allows it no scope." *

But I would put the matter in another way, which unfortunately is not Mr. Spencer's way at all. I do not believe with him that right and duty are merely "*instincts raisonnés.*" I hold that in ethics—the rule of what should be, as distinct from what is—we must begin with the facts, not of man's animal, but of his moral nature: personality, will, consciousness; that invisible, but most real world, which is the domain, not of the physicist, but of the metaphysician. As I insisted in the Fourth Chapter, it is from personality that all rights spring; all rights, not only the rights of men. For to the lower animals we may attribute at least *quasi* rights, in proportion as they advance toward personality. They are not strictly persons; but there is in them an element which is the foundation of personality; *ein Stück persönliches*, Trendelenburg calls it. And here is the true ground of the legal

* *Social Statics*, c. x. § 4.

prohibition of cruelty to them. But only man, self-conscious, self-determined, morally responsible, is, in the proper sense of the word, a *Person*. And of personality liberty of volition—wherein all other liberties are grounded—is the necessary outcome. A man is lord of himself. He has an indefeasible right to live out his own life, as a man. And he has an indefeasible right to all that is necessary to enable him to do that. The word person denotes the individual as capable of rights (*rechtsfähig*) and in one sense we may say that all rights are personal. They spring from personality.

Let us lay this fundamental truth to heart, for it is of the most momentous practical importance. The principle of right, I say, is human personality —the ethical idea and psychological being of man. From this fount flow all those various natural rights which constitute his primordial, inalienable, and imprescriptible inheritance. But the Person is found only in society. Only in opposition to the "Thou," does the "I" arise. It is in civilisation that the idea of right unfolds itself. And according to the degree of civilisation—which means man's consciousness of himself and his environment—positive rights vary. The more developed the consciousness, the greater the right. Children have not the same positive rights as men; and there are states of civilisation which are infantine, nay, embryonic. In the earliest historical period, the ethical idea is dim, obscure, dream-like. Gradually, man attains to clearer knowledge of himself and

of his ethical end; and the concept of right, little by little, purifies and shapes public and private life. To the *validity* of all right, the recognition of the community is essential. And when in treating of man's natural rights we pass from the abstract to the concrete, we must ever remember that those rights are conditioned by the social organism in which man is found. It is only by an effort of the imagination that we abstract the individual from the community. The primary error of modern publicists of the Rousseauan School is to forget this, and to legislate for an imaginary man, belonging to a fabulous prehistoric period, "When wild in woods the noble savage ran." Not man unclothed, but man clothed upon, is the true ideal; man developed and cultivated to the utmost by society; his affections, capacities, and powers all brought under the sway of reason. And the natural rights of this ideal have only an ideal value. The individual is a portion of the social organism. His rights exist in subordination to that whole of which he is a part. They are conditioned by his duties. To which we may add, that the whole is before the parts of which it is composed. The preservation of the whole is the condition of the existence of the parts. And, in the last resort, the whole, for its self-preservation, possesses a right to dispose of the parts, according to the dictum "Salus populi suprema lex."

Now all this holds good of the right of private property. Its ultimate ground is necessity, issuing

from the reason of things. Private property, like individual liberty—of which, indeed, it is a part—is necessary to the full idea of human personality, to its due explication, its complete development. It is the instinct of self-preservation which leads us to appropriate things, to convert them into lasting instruments of the will. And a thing, being void of self, has no right against a person possessing selfhood. Property is a specific instrument of human will and of human aims. It is realised liberty. As Locke observes: "Every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has a right to but himself. The labour of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his."* Yes, we may. And we may say the same of the labour of his mind, and of the work of his brain. A man has a right to be himself, to live out his own life. But the most valuable part of his life is the intellectual. He has a right to the fruit of his labour. And mental labour is of far more account than physical.

But wherein does property really consist? Not in bare possession. There may be property without possession, and possession without property. My watch may be in the possession of a thief. But it is still my property. Possession is merely physical. Property belongs to the moral realm, the realm of rights. And, as I have already observed, it is only in the social organism that rights become valid. It is not that the original source of the right

* *Of Civil Government*, c. v.

to property is in the will of the community. The mere volition of a tribe, of a nation, of the whole human race, cannot really create right, in the philosophical sense of the word. The true source of right is in the reason of things, which is ethical. But only in civil conditions is the right to property, like all rights, realised. And as the right to property becomes valid in civil society, so does its possession imply duties to civil society. The rights of property and the duties of property spring together from the idea of the social organism, and must, therefore, symmetrically correspond. The happiness, nay the maintenance of the state depends upon the balance. The cupidity of human nature is ever tending to destroy it.

To sum up the argument. The right to private property is a natural right. It is the expression and the guarantee of moral personality, and is therefore inviolable. It is a necessary means of the ethical development of the individual, of the explication of personality. But, like all rights, it becomes valid only in the community in which it is exercised. It is a moral entity, limited by the idea of the inviolable personality of others, by the general laws and principles of ethics. It is conditioned by correlative duties varying in extent, according to the degree of civilisation and the circumstances of the age. It is held in subordination to the supreme claims of the community. It must not be exercised arbitrarily, not abused wantonly. It must be used for the

good of the community in which it is possessed, as well as for the good of the possessor. It must be *organised* in the commonwealth; that is, it must be regulated by reason.

And now, turning aside from these abstract considerations, let us look out into the concrete world, and see how things really are in respect of property. It will suffice if we confine our attention to our own country—the richest country in the world. For what we see there, we may see, in greater or less degree, elsewhere. The tendency is everywhere the same. Think of the condition, the economical condition, of this vast London in which I am writing; of the appalling contrasts exhibited by the thousands of rich and the millions of poor. Realise what the words mean which M. Zola uses in his terrible picture of the famishing Gervaise: "Ah! la crevaison des pauvres, les entrailles vides qui crient la faim, les besoins des bêtes claquant des dents et s'empiffrant de choses immondes, dans ce grand Paris, si doré et si flambant." "I know the East end of London very well," testifies Dr. Ryle, the Protestant Bishop of Liverpool; "the men are living there little better than beasts." "Half beast, half devil," he thinks, "would truly describe them." Not long ago the *Times* spoke of the slums of London as "the kitchen-midden of humanity." "Ten thousand of our fellow creatures,"

wrote the well-known philanthropist, S. G. O., to the same journal, "are begotten and reared in an atmosphere of brutality, a species of human sewage, the very drainage of the vilest productions of ordinary vice." Picture the hungry hordes who go up and down the streets seeking work, and finding none; that great army of the unemployed with no choice between imprisonment in the workhouse and starvation outside. And what employment, it often is, if they succeed in finding it! Think of the wretched women who make the boxes in which matches are sold—their pay $2\frac{1}{4}$d. for turning out a gross of them, and putting on the labels, and tying them up in bundles, themselves providing paste, firing, and string. Think of their scarce happier sisters, who toil from morning to night, folding, folding, folding sheets of cheap Bibles—well pleased if they can thereby earn ten shillings a week. Such, in outline, which can be only too easily filled, are the facts which meet us in our great cities. I am told, however, that there is improvement every year. It may be so. But I cannot shut my eyes to the sights which stare me in the face every day; to the deep and widespread degradation, physical, mental, and moral, surging around the well appointed houses in which we, "the comfortable classes," lead our cultured, comely, and commodious lives; or to the abject poverty which is a main cause of that degradation. Of the rural population I need hardly speak. Fifty years ago Lord Beaconsfield

drew, in *Sybil*, the picture of their condition, heightening it by a not wholly imaginary contrast:

"Remember what they once were—the freest, the bravest, the best natured, and the best looking, the happiest and most religious race upon the surface of this globe. And think of them now, with all their crimes, and all their slavish sufferings; their soured spirits and their stunted forms; their lives without enjoyment, and their deaths without hope."

Am I told that this is rhetoric? Well, let us come to figures, which are more eloquent than any tropes. The total production of the United Kingdom may be roughly estimated at £1,250,000,000. Of this sum, the share taken by landlords, capitalists, and middle men amounts in round numbers to £800,000,000, and the share taken by skilled and unskilled labourers to £450,000,000. "The reward," Mr. Mill has somewhere observed, "instead of being proportioned to the labour and abstinence of the individual, is almost in an inverse ratio to it: those who receive the least, labour and abstain the most."

Now is this condition of the community, is the distribution of wealth issuing in such a state of the social organism, reasonable? Is it right? The two questions, remember, are really one. For reason and right are identical. There are those who, more or less explicitly, contend that it is. Well does Mr. Henry George remark: "There is a gospel of selfishness, soothing as soft flutes to those, who having fared well themselves, think that

everybody ought to be satisfied." I am sorry to say that gospel is not unfrequently preached in Christian churches. The *Beati pauperes* of Christ is converted into *Beati possidentes*, in the mouths of many who claim to prophesy in His name. Then, there is a sect of political economists for whom to buy in the cheapest and to sell in the dearest market, is the whole duty of man, and the payment of wages the sole bond of human society. This is that Benthamite doctrine which Mr. Carlyle denounced as "a wretched, unsympathetic, scraggy Atheism and Egoism." It is what George Sand called "the love of money erected into a dogma of public morality." The practical outcome is the declaration which we so often hear, that a man has a right to do what he will with his own. This is indeed a contradiction in terms. A right is not a thing which can be used by the mere arbitrariness of self-will. If you so use it, you convert it into a wrong, for it is a moral entity conditioned by duties. Rights and duties can no more exist apart, than can the three angles of a triangle. Speaking generally, all this seems to be hidden from the eyes of the wealthy. It has been said by Victor Hugo, not too strongly, "The Paradise of the rich is made out of the hell of the poor." That the wealth of the world should increase so rapidly as it does increase, and that so large a share of its benefits should be absorbed by a little class of capitalists, while so small a share falls to the great mass of

producers,* is surely sufficient proof that the world is out of joint upon this vital question. The sophisms of selfishness, the platitudes of political economists, are opposed to those "moral laws of nature and of nations," which rule supreme over property, commerce, industry, as elsewhere. "It is unjust, it cannot last," judged the wise Duke of Weimar when the first Napoleon's glory was at its height. We must judge likewise of the present distribution of property.

"To me, at least, it would be enough to condemn modern society as hardly an advance on slavery or serfdom, if the permanent condition of industry were to be that which we behold, that ninety per cent. of the actual producers of wealth have no home that they can call their own beyond the end of the week; have no bit of soil, or so much as a room that belongs to them; have nothing of value of any kind except as much old furniture as will go in a cart; have the precarious chance of weekly wages which barely suffices to keep them in health; are housed for the most part in places that no man thinks fit for his horse; are separated by so narrow a margin

* Mr. Ruskin's charming account of the way in which his own patrimony was acquired supplies an excellent illustration of what I am writing. "My father and his partners entered into what your correspondent mellifluously styles 'a mutually beneficent partnership' with certain labourers in Spain. These labourers produced from the earth, annually, a certain number of bottles of wine. These productions were sold by my father and his partners, who kept nine-tenths, or thereabouts, of the price themselves, and gave one-tenth, or thereabouts, to the labourers. In which state of mutual beneficence my father and his partners naturally became rich, and the labourers as naturally remained poor. Then my good father gave all his money to me." *Arrows of the Chace*, vol. ii. p. 102.

from destitution, that a month of bad trade, sickness, or unexpected loss, brings them face to face with hunger and pauperism. . . . . This is the normal state of the average workman in town or country."

So Mr. Frederic Harrison, as quoted in the *Report of the Industrial Remuneration Conference.* And I entirely agree with him. To the like effect writes Mr. Giffen in the Second Volume of his *Essays on Finance.* "No one," this eminent statistician judges, "can contemplate the present condition of the masses of the people, without desiring something like a revolution for the better."

What then is the true remedy? Socialism professes to offer one. Let us see what it really amounts to. It is well worth while to do this. My lamented friend, the late Sir Henry Maine, has well observed, in his last work: "There can be no more formidable symptom of our time than the growth of Irreconcileable bodies within the mass of the population; associations of men who hold political opinions as men once held religious opinions. They cling to their creed with the same intensity of belief, the same immunity from doubt, the same confident expectation of blessedness to come quickly, which characterises the disciples of an infant faith."* The enthusiasm, no less than the growing numbers, of the Socialists entitles them to the candid attention of every publicist; for en-

* *Popular Government*, p. 25.

thusiasm is one of the greatest factors in the world's history. Let us see what is the means by which they seek to set the world right on this matter of property.

It is a very simple means. It is, in effect, to annihilate private property. And here I may be met with the objection: "You are confounding two things that are quite different: Communism is one thing, Socialism another." Well, I am fully aware that a distinction is often set up between the two things. But I confess it seems to me a distinction without much practical difference. Communism postulates—or necessarily implies, if it does not actually postulate—the complete abolition of private property, and the supply of each individual from the common store, without much regard, apparently, to the contributions to that common store which the individual may, or may not, have made. And so the pithy formula of Louis Blanc: "De chacun selon ses facultés; à chacun selon ses besoins." Socialism, at all events as expounded in England, does not, in words, go so far as this. But it certainly denies private property in the instruments of production, and seeks to "socialise" them. Thus, Mr. Hyndman desiderates "collective ownership of land, capital, machinery, and credit," * which, surely, comes very close to the annihilation of private property. Would it not reduce individual ownership to the

* *Will Socialism benefit the English People?* a Debate between Charles Bradlaugh and H. M. Hyndman, p. 12.

peculium of a Roman slave? But there lies before me *The Manifesto of the Socialistic League*, "signed by the Provisional Council at the foundation of the League on December 30th, 1884, and adopted at the General Conference, held at Farringdon Hall, London, on July 5th, 1885"—presumably, an authoritative document. Take the following extract from it:

"The workers, although they produce all the wealth of society, have no control over its productions or distribution; the *people* who are the only really organic part of society, are treated as a mere appendage to capital—as a part of its machinery. This must be altered from the foundation; the land, the capital, the machinery, factories, workshops, stores, means of transit, mines, banking, all means of production and distribution of wealth, must be declared and treated as the common property of all. . . . . Only by such fundamental changes, only by the transformation of Civilisation into Socialism, can those miseries of the world before-mentioned be amended."

Messrs. William Morris and Belfort Bax, who are among the most intelligent of the Socialist leaders, in their annotations appended to this document, tell us, "The end which true Socialism sets before us is the realisation of absolute equality of condition, helped by the development of variety of capacity." Is this exposition correct? If it is, surely, Mr. Bradlaugh, who unites to strong common sense the advantage of a certain legal training, is not much out when he writes:

"I understand and define Socialism as (1) denying or destroying all individual private property: and (2) as affirming that

Society, organised as the State, should own all wealth, direct all labour, and compel the equal distribution of all produce. I understand a Socialistic State to be (3) that State in which everything would be common as to its user and in which all labour would be controlled by the State, which from the common stock would maintain the labourer and would take all the produce of the labour. That is (4) I identify Socialism with Communism." *

Now what are we to say to this nostrum, whereby the Socialistic League would remedy the miseries of the world? At the outset it is open to this manifest objection, that the remedy is worse than the disease. I do not underrate the gravity of the disease, as will appear from what I have already said. But what does the socialistic proposal really mean? It means the undoing of the work of civilisation. For in what does the progress of European society consist? It consists in the evolution of the individual. Among our Aryan ancestors, in the earliest stages known to us of their social organisation, we find neither personal liberty, nor its most characteristic incident, single ownership. The unit of the public order is not the individual, but the family, whose head exercises despotic power over its members. Not several, but common possession, is the form in which property is held. For long ages the unemancipated son differed nothing from a slave. The history of Western civilisation, whatever else it may be, is certainly the history of the growth of personal liberty and of private property. And the two things are most intimately

* *Socialism, For and Against*, by Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, p. 1.

connected, for property is but liberty realised. Socialism, as Proudhon confessed, "is apt to take its assumptions for facts; its Utopias for institutions." Its Utopias, realised, would, alas! mean barbarism. And what can be more false than some of its assumptions? Take one, for example, insisted on in the extract which I gave just now from the *Manifesto of the Socialistic League*, that "the workers produce *all* the wealth of society." Does not capital, then, create value? Does it not render human labour more productive by promoting co-operation and by the use of improved machinery? A machine, and the men who work it, both create value; and both the labour stored up in the machine, and the men who work it, deserve reward; in the one case the reward is called profits, in the other wages. It is not true that "the workers produce all the wealth of society;" or that "living labour creates all value." But it is true that the Socialistic theory reduces all labour to unskilled labour. It is true, also, that Socialism is in direct conflict with man's natural rights; and that is its sufficient condemnation. It is fatal to human liberty: for it is the negation of man's most sacred prerogative to be himself, to live out his own life. Its method is like that of the well-intentioned but unwise father, who is related by Mr. Samuel Weller to have cut off his son's head, in order to cure him of squinting.

Socialism indeed, if we consider it in its con-

structive proposals, is but one of the many expressions of the abounding materialism of the day. It is a chapter, and a very ignoble one, in what Mr. Carlyle was wont to call "pig philosophy," It is devoid of any true notion of the organic, which is essentially rational and ethical. It would reduce the public order to a machine, and would bring in an era of universal slavery, with a modicum of pig's wash for all. Shall we barter our birthright of liberty for a mess of pottage? And such a mess! No: the realisation of the socialistic idea must, at any cost, be prevented: even if we have to seek in the gallows and the sword the ultimate answer to its votaries. The preservation of the fair frame of civilisation is of infinitely more account than are the lives of a horde of fools and fanatics.

The importance of Socialism appears to me to lie not in its crude and monstrous theories, but in this; that, to quote certain words of the late Professor Ingram, "it is alike the inevitable and indispensable expression of the protest of the working classes, and the aspiration after a better order of things." But what is the foundation on which that better order must be reared? I answer, the moral law. Other foundation can no man lay. Aquinas goes to the heart of the matter in a few pregnant words, which, though written six centuries ago are as applicable, now, as they were then: for the truth

which they express is not of an age, but for all time. "The possession of riches is not, in itself, unlawful, if the order of reason be observed: that is to say, that a man possess justly what he owns, and that he use it in a proper manner for himself and others."* Let us consider a little what this dictum involves. To render property lawful—that is, ethical, rightful—a man must possess justly what he owns. *Justly.* What does that mean? Does it mean that a man is warranted by the moral law, in *any* gain which he may make, without bringing himself into the police court? That is a very common view, and is very generally acted upon. The cheapening of commodities, by unrestricted competition, has been the guiding idea of English manufacture, and of English commerce, during the last half-century. To get out of men the utmost exertion of which they are capable, for the smallest wages which they can be induced to accept, is very widely supposed to sum up the whole duty of an employer toward his "hands." We have forgotten that these "hands" are men. We have treated them as merely animated machines. Well, I say, unhesitatingly, that to pit a destitute man against his destitute fellows, and to wring from him his

* "Ea quæ exterius possidentur necessaria sunt ad sumptionem ciborum, ad educationem prolis, ad sustentationem familiæ, et ad alias corporis necessitates; consequens est quod nec secundum se etiam divitiarum possessio est illicita si ordo rationis servetur, quod juste homo possideat quæ habet, et quod eis debito modo utatur ad suam et aliorum utilitatem." *Contra Gentes*, lib. 3, 123.

labour for the scantiest pittance to which he can be ground down, is *wrong*. The necessity of the seller does not make it right to underpay him. If I give him less than a *justum pretium*, an equitable price, for his work, I do in fact rob him. And this is at once the most common and the most disgraceful form of theft: the most common, for it is found in all departments of life; the most disgraceful, because it is the most cowardly. It is a duty of strict justice for the employer to give to his work-people a *justum pretium*. The violation of this duty is reckoned by the Catholic Church among the sins that cry to heaven. And the measure of the *justum pretium* is the means of living a decent life, morally and materially; which includes not merely food and clothing, house and home, but leisure and spiritual cultivation: not merely, as the schoolmen speak, *bona naturæ necessaria*, but also *bona statui necessaria*. But the very notion of a *justum pretium* has well-nigh died out of the popular mind, which sums up its code of commercial morality in the maxim: "Buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest:" a maxim involving a principle that would justify the most atrocious forms of "sweating" and rackrenting.* It

* The following very sensible and suggestive remarks of Mr. Hyndman, written, indeed, in another connection, may fitly be subjoined here: "But it may be asked, how is value to be determined, save by competition and higgling of the market? Value is not so determined to-day. Supply and demand only regulate

may, however, be said: "Everywhere throughout nature, variety and competition are the conditions of advance: the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, are *truths*, however stern, and are not to be altered by whole libraries of sentiment." I reply: The struggle for existence is, indeed, the universal rule of nature. But the business of man, who is an ethical animal, having perception of right and wrong, justice and injustice, is to moralise that struggle. Freedom of contract? Good. But to constitute freedom of contract there must be parity of condition. What parity of condition is there between the replete manufacturer and his starving "hand"? I say, without a shadow of doubt, that to much property the saying of Proudhon is

relative values of commodities over short periods; cost of production—that is the average quantity of social human labour needed to bring them forward for exchange—governs the exchange value of the mass of commodities in the long run. A letter is sent nearly the world over for 2½*d.*, no matter how important the nature of its contents or how anxious the sender to have it delivered; public advantage has produced an international post, in spite of all international jealousies. A traveller takes a passage at a fixed cost, though, maybe, he would pay fifty times the sum asked rather than not go. Even in cities the government, or the municipalities, regulate cab-fares in order to check the working of that very higgling of the market, and to regulate the action of those very supply and demand, and caveat-emptor maxims which middle-class economists never weary of proclaiming as the law of all laws, not to be set aside without positive danger. Here, then, we may foresee with the accuracy of scientific knowledge a community in which the social forces will be used for determinate social ends." *The Historical Basis of Socialism*, p. 468.

strictly applicable: "La propriété c'est le vol." "As a fact, much of the wealth of the rich classes in modern Europe has been gathered together, and is kept up, by dreadful deeds of cruelty, extortion, and fraud." *

But suppose that a man's property has been justly acquired. To render his possession of it valid, according to the moral law, there lies upon him the obligation of employing it in a proper manner for himself and others. Nothing is falser than the saying that a man has a right to do what he likes with his own. A man has not a right to do what he likes with his own. He has only a right to do what he ought with his own; which, after all, is his own in a very qualified sense. The only things which a man can in strictness call his own—and even here he is under the law of conscience—are his spiritual, intellectual, and physical faculties. The material object on which he exercises these faculties is subject to a higher ownership than his; to the indefeasible title of the human race, represented to him by the community in which he lives. Of the material surroundings which he calls "mine," he is but a usufructuary, a trustee. The ultimate and inalienable ownership of what Aristotle called "the bounty of nature" is in the human race. Each country belongs, in the last resort, to its inhabitants in general; each country, with all that makes it a country—not merely its land, but all

* *Groundwork of Economics*, by C. S. Devas, § 261.

that has been taken from the land, from time immemorial, and transformed into the various instruments of civilised life. The community is the overlord not merely of the possessor of the soil, but of the shopkeeper, the manufacturer, the banker. Mr. Chamberlain's doctrine of "ransom" is truer than he deems, for he does not carry it far enough. Not only the soil of the country, but its entire accumulated wealth, natural and fabricated, is, I say, in the last resort, the property of the country. The individual owner of any portion of it holds subject to that higher title. It has been well observed by Mr. Mill, "That the earth belongs, first of all, to the inhabitants of it; that every person alive ought to have a subsistence before any one has more; that whosoever works at any useful thing ought to be properly fed and clothed before any one, able to work, is allowed to receive the bread of idleness—these are moral axioms." * Yes: these are moral axioms; and they carry us a long way. But further. Property means exclusion. But has any one the right absolutely to shut off others from the benefit of that which is his? Assuredly not. Solidarity is the law of the human race. No man liveth to himself. The very constitution of civilised life gives rise to the duty that ownership must be made a common good to the community. It is worthy of notice that in the middle ages the fiduciary nature of property was emphatically re-

* *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. ii. p. 385.

cognised. Land was then almost the only form of wealth. And, as we all know, to the possession of land, duties were strictly attached; and those duties were rigorously exacted. This principle must be recognised, in respect of wealth generally; recognised, and if need be, legally enforced.

So much, assuredly, is involved in the observation of the order of reason, regarding this great question of property. And, as assuredly, nothing can be less reasonable than the *régime* of competition and individualism, in support of which so many ponderous tomes of nonsense, dignified as political economy, have been inflicted upon a long-suffering world. That *régime* is passing away. Socialism means so much. And the task which lies before the world is the re-organisation of industry upon an ethical basis. The abuses of the old-world organisation were manifest. They have disappeared. But the organisation has disappeared too. The old fellowship of labour is a recollection of the past. The new fellowship of labour is the hope of the future.* The era is surely approaching when, in

* It has been observed by Mr. Carlyle—and they are among the wisest words which he ever wrote—"At no time, since the beginnings of society, was the lot of the . . . . dumb millions of toilers so utterly unbearable as it is, even in the days now passing over us. It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched. But it is to live miserable, we know not why; to work sore, and yet gain nothing; to be . . . . isolated, unrelated, girt in with a cold, universal *laissez-faire*. *Past and Present*, p. 234.

Mr. Herbert Spencer's happy words, "One man will not be suffered to enjoy without working, that which another produces without enjoying;" when what Mr. Mill justly calls "the great social evil of a non-labouring class" will no longer be tolerated; when the true answer to Socialism, with its barbarous schemes for the confiscation of capital, will be given by a vast extension of co-operation which will make every labourer a capitalist. Co-operation! That word is the key to the solution of the great problem. The struggle of classes, which practically divides England into two nations, is due, we are often told, to a change in economic conditions. The introduction of machinery and steam, it is said, has brought about the vast conflict between capital and labour. Machinery and steam! Change in economic conditions! There is more than that in the disastrous, the suicidal struggle, of which strikes are the practical issue. There is this: that our industrial system has been based upon competition, while it should have been based upon co-operation.

The present industrial chaos is due to the lack of organic unity. The task which lies before us is the restoration of such unity. And the question of the day is whether, or rather, how far, the State should undertake that task. To represent every regulation of industry by public authority as an infringement of industrial liberty is absurd. The State may rightly check monopolies, curb and restrain compe-

tition, limit hours of labour, and in a thousand other ways fulfill its duty of promoting the prosperity of all its members, and especially of the necessitous. Thus, to give one example only, the manual toiler serves not only himself and his immediate employer, but his country. He has, therefore, a right against his country for a decent provision—not imprisonment in a workhouse—when he is past toil. And in discharging its duty in such respects, the State really advances individual liberty. It promotes that "moral freedom" which we may agree with Professor Green in regarding as the end of political organisation. But while allowing, or rather, insisting upon, all this, I cannot but think that even the more reasoned and scientific kinds of State Socialism, advocated by German thinkers of no mean ability, would paralyse much that is best in human society. It seems to me not easy to overrate the disastrous effect upon national life which must result, in proportion as the State assumes the functions of the father, the master, the guild, the church. I believe the new industrial organisation which the world must have, will be a natural growth, not an artificial machine; a growth rooted in the essential needs of human nature, which are ethical needs; in the regulative principles of human action, which are ethical principles; in "the mighty hopes that make us men," which are ethical hopes. So much seems to me certain. So much, and no more. "Prudens futuri temporis exitum caliginosa

nocte premit Deus." The wisest can but discern dimly the shadowy outlines of the new order: "the baby figure of the giant mass of things to come at large." It is enough for us to look for, and to hasten unto, that ampler day:

> "Enough, if something from our hands have power
> To live, and work, and serve the future hour."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ETHICS OF MARRIAGE.

A VETERAN statesman, in conversation with me a few years ago, spoke of marriage as "the stumbling-stone of the age." I replied: "So much the worse for the age, for an age which falls upon that stone shall be broken." I propose to offer, here, some considerations upon this grave topic.

Our existing civilisation unquestionably rests upon marriage, as the Christian religion has shaped it. For a thousand years, while that order of things which we call Christendom endured, the Catholic Church was the great ethical instructor of the progressive societies of the western world. The key note of her teaching was duty—the whole duty of man, in all the relations of life. And nowhere was that teaching clearer, loftier, and more fruitful, than in her doctrine concerning matrimony. It is not too much to say that she recreated marriage. That must, beyond controversy, be conceded to her, as a special and unique achievement. I do not undervalue what other great religions of the world

have done to purify and elevate domestic life. I am not insensible to the charm of the pictures which Sanscrit epic poetry presents to us, of the purity and simplicity of the primitive Aryan home. I recognise the great work which the Buddhist reformation did for woman, making her the companion of her husband, and assigning to her a freedom unattained by her in the other oriental systems. I confess how much even Islâm effected for the protection of the weaker sex, by curbing and curtailing the unbounded license which its prophet found among the deeply-sensual Arab tribes, to whom his revelation was first addressed. Still, it remains, that nowhere is the immeasurable superiority of Christianity to the rest of the world's creeds more clearly manifested than in its ideal and law of matrimony.

When the church first entered upon her struggle with the decadent Paganism of the Roman Empire, the archaic form of marriage, by which the wife came "under the hand of her husband" (as the legal phrase was), had become practically obsolete. The newer form, which made of it a voluntary conjugal society, terminable by divorce at the pleasure of either party, was well-nigh universal. Every schoolboy who has read his Horace knows what came of it. The work of the church was to heal the cancerous sore which, in the judgment of the greatest of Latin historians, was eating out Rome's moral life. Her remedy was the proclamation of

monogamy, holy and indissoluble. The law had been delivered by her Divine Founder in all its strictness: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery." The principle underlying the law, of the spiritual equality of woman with man, had been formulated by St. Paul: "In Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female." It was the task of the church to preach to the new civilisation this law, to indoctrinate it with this principle. Of what consummate difficulty the task was, may be judged from the vacillations of Roman jurisprudence, even after Christianity had received imperial recognition. Nay, upon one point, the church herself gave no certain sound for long ages. Even the most authoritative of her earlier doctors hesitate in their judgment respecting a husband who puts away an unfaithful wife and remarries. "He merely commits a venial sin," * St. Augustine says, in one of his latest writings—a much more lenient view than that expressed by him in earlier works. St. Ambrose goes further, in one place, although he elsewhere gives a contrary opinion, and declares that such a remarriage is no sin at all.† They were wrong. Gradually, but surely, the sterner and loftier ideal of the Christian

* "In ipsis divinis sententiis ita obscurum est . . . ut quantum existimo venialiter ibi quisque fallatur." *De Fide et Operibus*, c. 19.

† "Viro licet uxorem ducere si dimiserit uxorem peccantem." *Comment. in Epist. I. ad Corinth.*

law was apprehended by the church and asserted by the Roman pontiffs. And in the opening middle ages we find the absolute indissolubility of marriage, when once rightly contracted, save by the death of one of the contracting parties, firmly established in the canon law.

To that principle the Catholic Church has ever borne unflinching testimony. Divorce in the modern sense (*divortium a vinculo matrimonii*) has no place within her fold. Noteworthy is it, how in the midst of the scandals and offences which from time to time have disgraced the apostolic chair, the popes have ever stood forth as the champions of the sanctity, unity, and indissolubility of marriage; the bad popes, no less than the good. Let me, in passing, merely point to two conspicuous examples. I do not entertain much respect for the personal character of Clement VII. But it is undeniable that every fresh piece of evidence made accessible to us, from the English Public Record Office, and elsewhere, exhibits him as actuated by a high sense of duty in judging the matrimonial cause of Henry VIII. From the point of view of secular interest, Clement had everthing to gain by declaring the invalidity of the King's first marriage; everything to lose by upholding the rights of the blameless Katherine. He lost a kingdom from Catholic unity—a kingdom destined to grow into the imperial fabric of British greatness. But to suffer even that loss, rather than prostitute the sacrament

of matrimony to the lust of a tyrant, must be accounted gain. Again, our own century supplies a not less striking instance of Rome's zealous guardianship of this palladium of society. What a spectacle to men and angels does Pius VII., that holy and humble man of heart, present, confronting, in this sacred cause, the modern Titan, to whose magnetic power he was so keenly sensitive. Jerome Bonaparte, brother of the first Napoleon, had married an American Protestant girl of modest station, and the Emperor besought the Pope to declare the marriage void, alleging various bad reasons for its uncanonicity. Pius VII., in a document well worthy of perusal—for it sums up compendiously the Catholic doctrine of matrimony—goes through the Emperor's pleas, one by one, and pronounces them worthless. God had joined that man and that woman, had made of those twain one flesh; he dared not put them asunder. Blandishments and threats alike fail to move "the inflexible sweetness" of the aged pontiff. Come what may, he will not be unfaithful to the Supreme Judge, whose apostle he is, in whose name he speaks. And, as we know, he received an apostolic reward.

Within the Catholic Church, marriage is, of course, what it was. But the State is no longer Catholic; is no longer Christian. I will explain what I mean. It was said in bygone days, by a very learned judge,

that Christianity was part and parcel of the law of England. But, in truth, the old-world view of the Christian State went far beyond that. I do not know who has more precisely and accurately expressed it than Jeremy Taylor:

"God reigns over all Christendom, just as he did over the Jews . . . ! When it happens that a kingdom is converted to Christianity, the commonwealth is made a church, the gentile priests are Christian bishops, and the subjects of the kingdom are the servants of Christ. The religion of the nation is termed Christian, and the law of the nation made a part of the religion. There is no change of government, but that Christ is made king and the temporal power his substitute." *

Such, unquestionably, was the conception of the public order formerly entertained by Anglicanism, by Presbyterianism, by Puritanism, as by Catholicism. How strange does it seem to us in this nineteenth century! If there is any fact clearer than another about this age, it is the divorce between religion and civil government, which is everywhere taking place in the civilised world, and which has, in large measure, been already accomplished. The secularisation of the State, I say, is a most marked characteristic of the age in which we live. One result of it is the introduction everywhere of what is called civil marriage—the substitution of a purely secular contract for the old sacramental foundation of the social order. And with the religious view of wedlock, are more or

* *Life of Christ*, Introduction.

less disappearing those distinctive attributes wherewith religion had invested it. I need not say how largely, during recent years, the old law of marriage as it prevailed in Christendom, while Christendom existed, has been relaxed in England, in France, in the United States of America. In the Protestant parts of Germany, where the influence of Lutheranism, from the first, has been strongly hostile to Catholic matrimonial traditions, the nuptial tie has become a mere cobweb. I was assured, the other day, that at a recent dinner party in one of the provinces of Prussia, five out of eight ladies present were the divorced wives of one of the guests.

But, as we all know, even such light bonds appear to some publicists, both in America and in Europe, too heavy. These are they—I have spoken of them in an earlier portion of this work—who, starting with the proposition that marriage is an antiquated institution, belonging to an outworn religion, the tomb of love, and a source of stupidity and ugliness to the human race, would summarily abolish it. Let us, in this connection, listen to Mr. Karl Pearson, as he expresses himself in his very interesting work, *The Ethic of Free Thought:*

"Legalised life-long monogamy is in human history a thing but of yesterday, and no unprejudiced person, however much it may suit his own tastes, can suppose it a final form. . . . A new sex relationship will . . . . replace the old. . . . . The socialistic movement, with its new morality, and the movement for sex equality, must surely and rapidly undermine our current marriage customs and marriage laws. . . . The sex

relationship of the future will not be regarded as a union for the birth of children, but as the closest form of friendship between man and woman. . . . So long as it does not result in children, we hold that the State of the future will in no wise interfere; but when it does result in children, then the State will have a right to interfere, and this on two grounds: first, because the question of population bears on the happiness of society, as a whole; and, secondly, because child-bearing enforces, for a longer or shorter interval, economic dependence upon the woman. . . . Sex relationship, both as to form and substance, ought to be a pure question of taste, a simple matter of agreement, between the man and the woman, in which neither society nor the State would have any need or right to interfere. . . . Children apart, it is unbearable that church or society should in any official form interfere with lovers. . . . Such, then, seems to me the socialistic solution of the sex problem. Every man and woman would probably ultimately choose a lover from their friends; but the men and women who, being absolutely free, would choose more than one, would certainly be the exceptions." *

Commending to the careful consideration of my readers this social forecast of one of the most accomplished and zealous of English "advanced thinkers," I proceed to inquire whether any need for a new solution of what he calls "the sex problem" really exists. Mr. Karl Pearson, of course, assumes that Christianity is hopelessly discredited. Well, for the sake of argument, let us suppose that this is so. Does it follow that the doctrine concerning right and wrong in sexual relations, which, as a matter of fact, the modern world has received

* Pp. 431-443.

from Christianity, is also discredited? I reply, Most certainly not. The ethics taught by Christianity are not, as Mr. John Morley somewhere calls them, "a mere appendage to a set of theological mysteries." They are independent of those mysteries, and would subsist to all eternity though Christianity and every other religion should vanish away. The moral law is ascertained, not from the announcements of prophets, apostles, evangelists, but, as I have insisted, at length, in a previous chapter, from a natural and permanent revelation of the reason. "Natural reason," says Suarez, in his great treatise, *De Legibus*, "indicates what is in itself good or bad for man."* The great fundamental truths of ethics are *necessary*, like the great fundamental truths of mathematics. They do not proceed from the arbitrary will of God. They are unchangeable, even by the fiat of the Omnipotent. The moral precepts of Christianity do not derive their validity from the Christian religion. They are not a corollary from its theological creed. It is mere matter of fact, patent to every one who will look into his Bible, that Jesus Christ and his apostles left no code of scientific ethics. The Gospels and Epistles do not yield even the elements of such a code. Certain it is that when, in the expanding Christian society, the need arose for an ethical synthesis, recourse was had to the inex-

* L. ii. c. 6, n. 8.

haustible fountains of wisdom opened by the Hellenic mind; to those

> "Mellifluous streams that watered all the schools
> Of Academics, old and new; with those
> Surnamed Peripatetics, and the sect
> Epicurean, and the Stoic severe."

The clearness, the precision of psychological analysis, which distinguish the ethics of the Catholic schools, are due more to Aristotle and Plato, than to Hebrew prophets or Christian apostles. What the Christian religion did for morality, was chiefly to touch it with celestial fire, to vivify it by the idea of self-sacrifice, and to point to the Supreme Example of self-sacrifice; to enable man "to erect himself above himself," by exhibiting a standard of perfection, and by supplying supernatural motives for the imitation of that standard.

So much concerning Christianity and ethics in general. And now, of the ethics of marriage in particular. The work of Christianity for mankind is often spoken of as an emancipation. "The liberty wherewith Christ has made you free," says St. Paul. That liberty results from the subjugation of the lower self, the self of the passions and animal nature; from the enfranchisement of the higher self, of the rational, spiritual, divine element within us. Herein lies the true progress of mankind. And I claim for Christianity that it has been incomparably the greatest factor in that progress; that it has

done more than anything else to vindicate the fact and the rights of human personality. "Homo res sacra homini." Why this sacredness? Because man is a person, not a mere animal. And what Christianity has done, in this respect, for man, it has done even more emphatically for woman. The earliest form of marriage known to us—as Mr. McLennan has shown in a very learned chapter of his well-known work, it seems to have prevailed universally—was that in which the bride was obtained by capture; her volition counting for nothing, her consent not even sought. Then, she was accounted a mere chattel. Now, she is recognised as a person; her liberty inviolable; her will free; to be won, she must be wooed. Marriage is accounted as a contract, subject to the ethical rules that govern all contracts. Woman, like man, has shared in that progress from status to contract in which social development mainly consists, and which Christianity has unquestionably done much to forward.

But Christianity has done something more for woman than merely to vindicate her personality. I have elsewhere remarked that it changed men's lives by changing their ideal of life. It is matter of history how largely that ideal was influenced by the *cultus* of the Virgin Mother: "the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope." All that is most distinctive in Christian civilisation is bound up with its elevation of

women. And not its least distinctive feature is the value which it sets upon the virtue of chastity, whether in the virginal or in the married state. The conception idealised in the Madonna would have been absolutely unintelligible to the ancients. "Born of a woman" is the true account of the modern "home," with all its moralising influences. We may indeed say that the peculiarity specially differentiating the Christian from the pre-Christian family is that it is founded on woman, not on man.

Marriage is something more than a mere contract. We may put aside the ecclesiastical view of it. We may reject altogether the considerations which led St. Paul to call it *μέγα μυστήριον*, a great sacrament. Quite apart from that view, from those considerations, we must so account of it. For it is a symbol of the mystery whereby our spiritual life is joined to our bodily frames. Nay, it is more than that. It is the outward, visible, pre-eminently sensuous means whereby we attain to the inward spiritual grace of the purest joys, the most unselfish affections, that this world offers. It is, so to speak, a natural sacrament, of which the husband and the wife are the ministers. It is the accomplishment of the man's manhood and of the woman's womanhood, the blending of two personalities in a social organism embracing their whole existences, "no longer twain but one." But the personalities, though equal, are diverse. We speak of the "dis-

abilities" of woman's sex; and rightly. There are disabilities which result from the corporal conformation of woman; there are limits fixed by her physical constitution; there are, and there always must be, fundamental differences between her habitual occupations and those of men. More, there are far-reaching psychical differences. The old Platonic fable that the woman is the other half of the man, is profoundly true. She is the complement of him, and he of her.

> "He is the half part of a blesséd man
> Left to be finishéd by such as she;
> And she, a fair divided excellence
> Whose fulness of perfection lies in him."

Fecundity is the special gift of womanhood. Nor is maternity its only, or its chief, manifestation. The wife is "the fountain of life" in the household; her function is to renew, to reanimate, to revivify her consort in the struggle for existence, the battle of life. It has been well observed by Michelet: "La mission de la femme (plus que la génération même) c'est de refaire le cœur de l'homme. Protégée, nourrie par lui, elle le nourrit d'amour. L'amour c'est son travail propre." * The whole matter has been summed up by one whom I must account the most philosophical of living poets, and the most poetical of living philosophers. And

* *L'Amour*, p. 17.

familiar as his lines are, they will bear citation here:

> "For woman is not undevelopt man
> But diverse; could we make her as the man,
> Sweet love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
> Not like to like, but like in difference.
> Distinct in individualities,
> But like each other ev'n as those who love."

If such be the true ideal of marriage, what are its ethics? I have already observed that as a contract it is governed by those great principles prescribed by reason, for the regulation of obligations which touch the merely material interests of life. As a state of life, involving the fusion of personalities so distinct, and fraught with consequences most momentous to both, and to society, its unity and indissolubility issue from the nature of things in their ethical relations. Its basis is in the Absolute:

> "Sich hinzugeben ganz und eine Wonne
> Zu fühlen, die ewig sein muss!"

What means that thought of eternity which is ever present when men and women love their deepest and truest? It means that the transient intoxication of passion is justified to reason by its place in the eternal order of the universe. Let us consider this for a moment. The moral law is a principle of self-realisation. Its imperious dictate, the categorical imperative of duty, arises from the

relation of reason to itself, as its own end. Ethical action is the achievement by the self-conscious individual of the true purpose of his being, the bringing his will into harmony with that Universal Reason of which the moral law is the expression. It was to the moral law—a part of that law of nature which is the ideal pattern, ever to be kept before us—that the Divine Founder of Christianity appealed when He formulated His doctrine of marriage. The Mosaic legislation witnessed to the sanctity of the nuptial bond. But imperfectly. Not on every light occasion, on every frivolous pretext, did the Hebrew prophet allow a man to put away his wife. No. There must be a public process; there must be recourse to legal ministers, presumably wise and prudent men, who, before drawing up the instrument necessary for the separation, might reasonably be expected to counsel reconciliation. But Christ recurs to the divine original, to the ideal pattern of the institution, "from the beginning" in the counsels of Eternal Reason. "A man shall cleave to his wife;" "they twain shall be one flesh." So close a union is "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer," till death dissolves it. And we may here note, in passing, that as animated existence advances in the scale of being, it tends instinctively to this life-long union, the only considerable exception among the higher vertebrates—an exception which admits of explanation—being afforded by dogs. Such is the ideal which the august juris-

prudence of Rome has enshrined for us in the Digest: "Nuptiæ sunt conjunctio maris et feminæ, et consortium omnis vitæ; divini et humani juris communicatio." That, as the great jurisconsult discerned, was the true norm of marriage, however void in practice the license of his age might make it.

Nothing short of this norm, of this ideal, is adequate. And only where it is recognised, is the position of woman established on the true ethical basis. Feeble, loving, dependent, without this bulwark of indissolubility, this *consortium omnis vitæ*, she is ill assured against the vacillations of man's changing fancy, the caprices of his lawless appetite. And upon her position depends the family, depends society, depends civilisation in all that gives it moral dignity and worth. Let me, in this connection, quote some words of Michelet, the force and beauty of which would vanish in translation:

"La femme est dans toute l'histoire l'élément de fixité. Le bon sens dit assez pourquoi. Non seulement parce qu'elle est mère, qu'elle est le foyer, la maison, mais parce qu'elle met dans l'association une mise disproportionnée, énorme, en comparaison de celle de l'homme. Elle s'y met toute et sans retour. La plus simple comprend bien que tout changement est contre elle; qu'en changeant elle baisse très vite; que du premier homme au second, elle perd déjà cent pour cent. Et qu'est-ce donc au troisième? que sera-ce au dixième? hélas!" *

Shall I be told this is the language of poetry? I might well reply, with Plato, that poetry comes

* *L'Amour*, p. 32.

nearest to vital truth. I will, however, cite another witness, who is by no means open to the reproach of sentiment. The following are the remarks of Hume, the least emotional of philosophers:

"We need not be afraid of drawing the marriage-knot . . . the closest possible. The amity between the persons, where it is solid and sincere, will rather gain by it; and where it is wavering and uncertain, that is the best expedient for fixing it. How many frivolous quarrels and disgusts are there, which people of common prudence endeavour to forget, when they lie under the necessity of passing their lives together; but which would soon be inflamed into the most deadly hatred, were they pursued to the utmost, under the prospect of an easy separation! . . . We must consider, that nothing is more dangerous than to unite two persons so closely in all their interests and concerns, as man and wife, without rendering the union entire and total. The least possibility of a separate interest must be the source of endless quarrels and suspicions. The wife, not secure of her establishment, will still be driving some separate end or project; and the husband's selfishness, being accompanied with more power, may be still more dangerous." *

The gist of the whole matter has been presented in a dozen words by one whom I must account, not only the greatest artist in romantic fiction, but the profoundest master of the social sciences, that the world has ever known. "Nothing more conclusively proves the necessity of indissoluble marriage than the instability of passion." Of the many wise utterances of Balzac on the philosophy of life, this, surely, is one of the wisest.

So much must suffice concerning this most

* *Essay on Polygamy and Divorce.*

momentous question of the ethics of marriage. Shall I be told that it is a hard saying—that the ideal is too perfect? But perfection is the supreme law of ethics, as of æsthetics. It baffles? Yes; but it inspires also. It is always unattainable? True; but we may indefinitely approximate to it. He who said, "Be ye perfect," knew what was in man. Men will live and die for perfection. For mediocrity they will neither live nor die. The idea of perfection is the source of all greatness in private life, no less than in the public order; in "the daily round, the common task," no less than in art and poetry and philosophy. Let the perfect ideal of indissoluble marriage be once definitively rejected, and Western civilisation will inevitably fall back to that wallowing in the mire from which Christianity rescued it. And in whatever degree you tamper with this ideal, and derogate from its strictness, in that degree do you demoralise woman. Yes, and man too; for assuredly he speedily sinks to her level—*κακῆς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα γίγνεσθαι κακόν*. The moral tone of society, I say, depends upon the chastity of woman. And the chastity of woman depends upon the absolute character of marriage. But here, as elsewhere, the philosophy of relativity seeks to banish the absolute. It degrades the indissoluble state of matrimony to a mere dissoluble contract, to a mere regulation of social policy, to a mere material fact, governed by the animal, not the rational, nature.

BRANCH OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER X.

THE ETHICS OF ART.*

ONE of the problems which I have most constantly had before me, in my poor historical researches, has been, how best to seize the moral physiognomy of an epoch. I have found the greatest help for the solution of that problem, not in the formal theological treatises nor in the set philosophical discussions of any age, but in its art—taking the word in the widest sense. There is no accessory of human life which is void of ethical significance; and, as a general rule, the details which are the minutest, the most trifling, are also the most significant, because they tell their tale unconsciously, spontaneously. The things which we

* I put aside, in this chapter, the art of music, as being independent of the practical reason. It may well be that each feeling of humanity expresses itself by a different musical tone, as the Greeks believed. (See the curious passage in the Third Book of Plato's *Republic*.) But the feelings, quâ feelings, are neither moral nor immoral. They are unmoral. It is only when music is united to words, that it comes within the domain of ethics.

take pleasure in contemplating, the streets, the houses, the very furniture and raiment in which we live and move and have our being, are so many revelations of us. The hidden man of the heart leaves his impress upon every particular of external existence. Man is an artistic animal in a very special sense. The creatures lower than ourselves in the scale of sentient existence manifest, indeed, wonderful skill and intelligence. They are artists. But must we not say that they are unconscious artists? They know. They remember. "They reason not contemptibly," Milton thought. But do they possess that intellectual faculty of reflection, that μνήμη συνθετική of which man makes such vast use? And how far can they forecast the future? A bird's nest is a miracle of workmanship. But is the bird of a year old prescient of the eggs for which it builds? It can hardly be that such knowledge guides its activity. A captive beaver constructs the dam which can be of no possible service to it. Again, I am far from denying that the feeling of beauty penetrates to the animal world, and is a vivifying and sustaining principle there. But it is like the knowledge of the animal world, half realised, indeliberate, "without a conscience and an aim." Of man it has been said, and truly, "L'art est sa nature même." And of no other animal can this be said, in the full sense of the words.

What, then, does the art of the nineteenth

century tell us of the men and women of the century? Survey the crowds who hurry through the streets of our cities. I suppose it may with truth be said, that in proportion as they belong to the century, and reflect its *ethos*, they become less and less æsthetic. In out-of-the-way corners of the world, beauty still lingers in common life. It appears to be a special function of nineteenth-century civilisation to banish the picturesque. Can anything be more hideous than the garments in which we swathe ourselves, except, indeed, it be the dwellings in which we live? Consider the architecture of the age, its own proper style, as exemplified in the domestic edifices which line our streets. Has the world ever witnessed anything like their monotonous meanness? And that, be it remembered, is the real architecture of the century. All our more ambitious structures are imitations —successful in proportion as they are exact copies —of buildings of former ages. Let us turn to another of the fine arts. Walk through any collection of paintings of the day, say the Exhibition of the Royal Academy in London or the French *Salon*. What do the works which hang upon the walls speak of? Here is a picture which reveals skill of hand. There is one which manifests power of execution. Fantastic, sentimental, realistic, ambitious, are the most laudatory adjectives which are wont to occur to us as we pass the medley of naked goddesses and unclothed women, the landscapes

and the portraits, the *genre* scenes and the historical panoramas. It has been well remarked that in the pictures of the old masters you have not merely a natural scene, but the soul of the painter who looked upon it. That attribute of soul is precisely what is wanting in modern art. I speak generally, and would of course allow exceptions. I reverence the sombre greatness and pathetic power of Turner, "the artist of the labour and sorrow and passing away of men." I am ever more and more impressed by the divinatory faculty and creative skill of Landseer, who probably saw more deeply into the souls of the "brute creation"—as it is the fashion to call our poor relations—than any painter that ever lived. They are gone: and how many successors have they left? All that our artists, whether painters or sculptors, usually aim at—there are indeed some among them who are the witnesses for and, I trust, the precursors of better things—is to copy exactly, to reproduce phenomena, to describe with minute exactitude and ever-increasing freedom, the obvious, the superficial, which in most cases is the vulgar, the gross, the ignoble. They are, in Charles Lamb's phrase, "deeply corporealised, and enchained hopelessly in the grovelling fetters of externality." And this they call "realism." The taste of the age, they tell us, demands reality. And such is their conception of the real. In its deep, paralysed subjection to physical objects, art seeks to make itself what is

called "scientific." It aims at speaking to the senses by precise delineation of the physical form, by accurate presentment of the passions of which that form is the instrument. And here it achieves a certain measure of success. By technical perfection, by audacities of the brush, it manages to tell its tale plainly, especially if, as not seldom happens, the tale is spiced with a flavour of lubricity. But it speaks merely to the senses. It leaves nothing in the mind for fancy to feed upon. One looks and passes by, and the image vanishes, even as a dream when one awaketh. Barren in nobleness and void of dignity, the arts of design, as they exist among us, proclaim that "glory and loveliness have passed away" from common life. "Nobleness and dignity!" I suppose no one, in the least competent to judge, would maintain, that the miles of canvas which have hung upon the walls of exhibitions of modern paintings, from the opening of the century to the present time, display as much of those divine gifts as the smallest work that has come down to us from Francia or Perugino.

Now why is this? It is, I apprehend, because, as Mr. Lecky has told us in his *History of Rationalism*, there is in the present day "a decline in the more poetical or religious aspects of man's nature." But poetry and religion mean inspiration and life. They mean that ideal which is the root of all greatness whatever, in thought or action. The fine arts, as they exist among us, bear witness

only too clear and decisive, to the deidealising of life. It has been remarked by a thoughtful critic: "L'art se calquant sur nous est devenu bourgeois. Dans quelle haute région eût-il pénétré, alors que tout tend vers la médiocrité des sentiments, et vers l'apathie morale d'une société gorgée de matérialisme? Ce qu'un poëte a dit de l'historien d'une fabuleuse histoire, que son récit n'a pas de ciel, on peut le dire de notre époque en général: la hauteur et la profondeur lui manquent, elle n'a pas de perspective idéale." Precisely. We have lost the ideal perspective. We have lost that very conception of the Absolute which is in truth the source and fount of glory and loveliness; that Absolute which is the True, the Good, the Beautiful; whereof all truth, goodness, and beauty of which we have knowledge, are but the faint emanations, the dim shadows. "What we call truth," according to Mr. Spencer, "is but the accurate correspondence of subjective to objective relations." The philosophy of relativity, interpreting and synthesising the thought dimly working in the general mind, empties truth of its old meaning. It derationalises art, as it derationalises ethics. It banishes the essential element of objectivity alike from our knowledge of what is right and from our love of what is beautiful. It conceives of ethics as artificial rules, deduced from immemorial experiences of utility, and transmitted by heredity. It conceives of art as mere mechanism for the pro-

duction of its *summum bonum*, "agreeable feeling;" "a casual coincidence of picturesque attitudes and sensations, passing with the passage of the moment which gives them birth, and owing their origin to time and climate, to national character and circumstances."

And now let me set down what I believe to be the true theory of art—the theory which, consciously or unconsciously, has inspired every great artist who ever lived. I do not know who has better formulated it than Kant in a pregnant passage of his *Critique of Judgment*: "Only the productions of liberty, that is, of a volition which founds its actions upon reason, ought properly to be called art." It was observed by Goethe that to read Kant is like going into a lighted room. What an illumination is thrown upon the whole subject of æsthetics by these few words of his! Here is brought out, for example, that profound difference between human and animal art, upon which I touched at the beginning of this chapter. In that endowment which is distinctive of man (although I am far from denying that the foreshadowings, the presentiments, of it may be found in the lower animals), in that "capability and god-like reason" which is his great good, is the root of art. As I observed, in a previous page, "the artist, like the philosopher, seeks the reason and essence of

things. But, while to the philosopher this reason and essence are revealed in a principle, in a general conception, to the artist they are revealed in a concrete form, as individual beauty." The object of the human intellect is truth. And truth means being, or that which is. The notion of being, as a reality existing by itself, underlies all others in our intelligence. To this idea of the Absolute all our intellectual operations have relation. All our sciences, all our arts, hold of it, and can have no rational meaning apart from it. To know it in one of its attributes, or to express it in one of the modes permitted to human thought, is the end of science as of art. But science may rest within, in the state of pure idea. Art is the external manifestation of the idea, the revelation of the invisible reality through the senses. It is "eternity looking through time." Does any one among my readers find this a hard saying? Does the expression, "invisible reality," offend him? Let him consider that even in material nature the most real, because the most energetic, the most intense forces, are precisely the imponderable, which, for the most part, are imperceptible to sense. Let him meditate upon this awhile, and then perhaps he will bear with me when I say that the idea which we have in us of the Infinite, the Absolute, corresponds to the only true and positive reality, whereof phenomena are merely the gross shadows. The real being of a thing is not in itself, as a phenomenon, but in the

ideal which causes it to be what it is. And that ideal is the true reality for art and the type of its representations. Emerson well puts it:

"In the fine arts, not imitation but creation is the aim. In landscapes the painter should give the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know. The details, the prose of nature, he should omit, and give us only the spirit and splendour. . . . He will give the gloom of the gloom, and the sunshine of the sunshine. In a portrait he will inscribe the character, and not the features, and must esteem the man who sits to him as himself only an imperfect picture or likeness of the aspiring original within." *

In proportion as a picture truly realises this end will it be a veritable work of art. For what is the difference between a good portrait and a photograph? What but this, that the painter seizes the expression of the sitter, which the mechanic cannot do? The construction of the bodily frame, the tint of the skin, the movements of the muscles, the play of the features, reveal to him psychological secrets. He discerns the permanent and constituent elements of the individual character. He creates in his mind an invisible model of his subject, and reproduces it with his brush. A picture is a work of art precisely in proportion to the quantity of the invisible, of the ideal which it contains. It is a dictum of Goethe: "This is true ideality—the ideality which loves to make use of the material presented to it by nature in such a fashion that the ideal truth thus embodied, the matter and the spirit, is accepted as the actual."

* *Essays*, p. 287 (Macmillan's Ed.).

Thus must we think of art, not as a superfluity for the amusement of idle dilettantism, but as a most august, a most precious, and most important good of human life. Not common truth, not vulgar reality, is the object of art. No. Its object is ideal loveliness discerned by the artist in "the high reason of his fancies." His elevated and elevating function it is, in the words of Plato, "to seek out, by the power of genius, the nature of the fair and graceful": "to win men, imperceptibly, into resemblance, love, and harmony with rational beauty." Art is the tongue of the ideal. It is an economy or accommodation whereby transcendental veritics are made accessible to us. It is symbolic, figurative, taking us more or less near by means of images to the Supreme Reality, which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. And it is precisely because man is not, as the philosophy of relativity teaches, the "mere passive result of outward impressions," but self-determined and therefore partaker of the Divine Infinity, that art, in the true and high sense of the word, appeals to him at all.

"Wär' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Wie könnten wir das Licht erblicken?
Lebt' nicht in uns der Gottheit eig'ne Kraft,
Wie könnte uns das Göttliche entzücken?"

If this is the true conception of art, it is easy to understand what ethical laws should govern it.

Beauty and morality spring from the same eternal fount; they are an expression of the same immutable truth. They are different sides or aspects of the same thing—of reason, order, harmony, right. To this language itself bears witness. We use the same adjectives to describe ethical and physical excellence. We speak of a fair maiden and a fair deed, of a foul murder and a foul way. In ethics, as in æsthetics, order, proportion, comeliness are instinctively discerned by us as good. Desire for the noble or beautiful, which is the fundamental idea of art, is also, Aristotle teaches, the basis of all morality, the common element of all the virtues. Τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα· κοινὸν γὰρ τοῦτο ταῖς ἀρεταῖς. The idea of perfection is a category of the intellect. It is a law supreme over every department of human activity, prescribing "the direction of a man's will to the highest possible realisation of his faculties." Do not misunderstand me. It is not the function of the artist to preach morality, to inculcate virtue. The laws of art are proper to itself. And they are the laws of beauty. But the beautiful is of the intellect, not of the senses, which merely supply the artist with his raw material. The eyes are only instruments of vision through which the soul looks. Æsthetic enjoyment is the reflection of an inner light or splendour from our reason upon material objects. The end of the intellect, let me repeat, is truth. And in words which, though not Plato's, to whom they are often ascribed, are as

admirable as hackneyed, the "beautiful is the splendour of the true."

"But the passions," it may be said, "surely you do not exclude them from the domain of art?" I reply in words which I am glad to borrow from the most considerable philosopher who has arisen in England since Coleridge: "Not in themselves, but only as absorbed in will, or thought, or spiritualised nature—only either as issuing in heroic act or as making way in collision with each other and destiny for a peace that is not in them, or as breathed into the life of nature and from it taking beauty and repose—are the passions fit material for art at all." * Or, to put more shortly what is thus admirably expressed by the late Professor Green, in a work of art everything depends upon the *ethos*. Is the impression left upon a healthy mind, sensuous or spiritual? That is the test. I say, "upon a healthy mind." "If Miranda is immoral to Caliban, is that Miranda's fault?" Mr. Herbert Spencer somewhere remarks upon the effect produced by putting a bonnet upon an antique statue of Venus undraped. The result is unquestionably obscene. Why? Because the obscenity was in the nude statue itself, which only required the addition of a bonnet to be discerned in its true character? No. As Mr. Spencer very properly observes, the true conclusion is, not that in the statue itself there was anything

* *Works of T. H. Green*, vol. iii. p. 15.

of obscene suggestion, but that this effect was purely adventitious; the bonnet, connected in daily experience with living women, calling up the thought of a living woman with the head dressed, but otherwise naked. This question of the nude may serve admirably to illustrate further what I am insisting upon. Nudity in a work of art is perfectly innocent if ideally beautiful. Schopenhauer has well noted the difference between the treatment of nudity by the artists of ancient Hellas, and by a certain school of artists in contemporary Europe. These modern painters and sculptors, he points out, produce "nude figures whose posture, drapery, and general treatment tend to excite the passions of the beholder; and thus pure æsthetical contemplation is at once annihilated, and the aim of art is defeated. The ancients are almost always free from this fault in their representations of naked loveliness, because they pursued their creative work in a pure objective spirit, filled with ideal beauty, not in the spirit of subjective base sensuality." * "Ideal beauty." Yes. Pruriency in æsthetics proceeds not from imagination but from the lack of it. The ideal is the principle of all true art, as of everything high and worthy in human life.

"Of all true art," and not merely of those arts of design of which I have been writing. Art—all art—is essentially one, and is everywhere subject to

* *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Book iii. § 40.

the same great laws, the same immutable principles. I suppose in this century it appeals to the greatest number of men and women under the form of literature. Poetry, the drama, and romantic fiction —which is really a development of the drama, for what is the modern novel but an unacted play ?—fill a large space in the lives of multitudes who never look upon a picture or a statue. I say, then, that the poet, the dramatist, and the novelist are bound by the same ethical rules as the painter. They, too, are ministers of the ideal. Their function is to present, amid the sordid realities of daily life, the image of a fairer and better world; to minister to that love of beauty and goodness which dwells in all men. I am far from saying that the novelist (let me, for the sake of brevity, speak of him only) should be a cloud-painter, a preacher of moral sermons dealing with *individua vaga*, with untrue types; that he should lose sight of things as they are. No; the novel should be a picture of actual life, of every-day reality, subject to that great rule so admirably formulated by George Sand—would that she had always followed it!—"Let the literary artist choose in the real what is worth painting." He will depict life truly, I say; he will not put darkness for light nor light for darkness, but will give us the darkness and light as they are. The passions are his legitimate subjects; the most imperious of all, the passion of love, is his chief and

most attractive theme. But, if I may quote words of my own, written elsewhere:

"Love is not to him what it is to the physiologist, a mere animal impulse which man has in common with moths and mollusca. His task is to extract from human life, even in its commonest aspects, its most vulgar realities, what it contains of secret beauty; to lift it to the level of art, not to degrade art to its level. And so he is concerned with this most potent and universal instinct, as transformed, in greater or less degree, by the imaginative faculty; whether dealing with it in its illicit manifestations, he exhibits it as the blight and bane of life, or depicts it in its pure and worthy expression—'the bulwark of patience, the tutor of honour, the perfectness of praise.' His *ethos* comes out in the treatment of his subject rather than in his personages, his plot, or his *dénouement*. It is easy to conceive of a work of fiction in which all the characters should be evil, but which should be severely ethical in its tone. An hour passed in Dante's Inferno does but intensify our longing to enter his Paradiso."*

And so Goethe, in vindication of his own novel, *Elective Affinities*: "The true poet is only a masked father confessor, whose special function is to exhibit what is dangerous in sentiment and pernicious in action by a vivid picture of their consequences." Whether it is informed by any high thought, any true ideal, is the ultimate ethical test in judging of a work of romantic fiction, as in judging of that social life whereof it is the "counterfeit presentment." Banish the ideal from the life of men, and by the operation of the inexorable law, "corruptio optimi pessima," men will sink below

* *A Century of Revolution*, p. 160.

the level of the lower animals, and will love the abnormal, the monstrous, the deformed, for its own sake. Such is the natural fruit of that philosophy which rejects the only rational conceptions of Right and Wrong, and degrades to the region of molecular physics, conceptions properly appertaining to the domain of the organic and the spiritual. Examples are not far to seek. And they are the sure signs of a decadent and effete civilisation.

APPENDIX.

A portion of Chapters I. and II. of this work appeared in the FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW *of November*, 1886, *under the title "Materialism and Morality." In the next number of the Review, Professor Huxley, in an article called "Science and Morals," took exception to certain observations of mine regarding his philosophical tenets and teaching. As I find myself unable, in the present volume, to withdraw those observations, it seems right to reprint here the following pages, published originally in the* FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW *of February*, 1887.

THE PROVINCE OF PHYSICS: A REJOINDER TO PROFESSOR HUXLEY.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY, in his article *Science and Morals*, in the December number of this Review, desiderates "an explanation" * of the "theory of his tenets" † expressed in my paper, *Materialism and Morality*, published in November. In proceeding to comply with the requisition of, I will not say my opponent, but my critic, I shall endeavour to be as little polemical as possible. To skill in controversy I make no pretence. And if I possessed it, assuredly I should not

* P. 792. My references throughout the Appendix, unless it is otherwise expressly stated, are to vol. xlvi. of the *Fortnightly Review*.

† P. 788.

choose to exercise it against Professor Huxley. I firmly believe that, as he had said, we have both at heart the interests of the same sacred cause: that we may both unfeignedly declare "seu vetus est verum, diligo sive novum," however widely our convictions as to what is true, may differ.

Before I turn to the point in Professor Huxley's strictures specially requiring attention from me, I must say a word or two as to my own article which elicited them. The Professor represents me as having proceeded "after the manner of a medieval disputant." I can conceive of nothing less medieval than my paper on *Materialism and Morality*, either in form or in thought. Professor Huxley, who quotes St. Thomas Aquinas —although with some misapprehension of his meaning*—must

* The first of the two passages quoted by Professor Huxley from St. Thomas Aquinas is, "Ratio autem alicujus fiendi in mente actoris existens est quædam præexistentia rei fiendæ in eo." "This," the Professor says, "puts the whole case [for Determinism] in a nutshell. The ground for doing a thing in the mind of the doer is, as it were, the pre-existence of the thing done." But that is not what Aquinas means. He means that you cannot do a thing unless you have an ideal conception of it as doable.

The second, which Professor Huxley also considers an excellent "statement of the case for Determinism," runs as follows:—

"Omnia quæ sunt in tempore, sunt Deo ab æterno præsentia, non solum ea ex ratione quâ habet rationes rerum apud se presentes, ut quidam dicunt, sed quia ejus intuitus fertur ab æterno supra omnia, prout sunt in sua præsentialitate. *Unde manifestum est quod contingentia infallibiliter a Deo cognoscuntur*, in quantum subduntur divino conspectui secundum suam præsentialitatem; et tamen sunt futura contingentia, suis causis proximis comparata."

This is a commonplace of the schools. "Futura contingentia" means free acts; and all Catholic theologians agree that they are infallibly foreknown. But they are foreknown as free, and cannot be predetermined by Absolute Power in any way that would destroy this freedom. Professor Huxley — no doubt unwittingly — cuts Aquinas's doctrine in halves, and adopts the half which suits him. Of the passage cited by Professor Huxley from the *De Civitate* it must suffice to say that St. Augustine means not an inevitable fate but a "wise" Providence.

be well aware how scholastic disputations were, and are still, conducted. I suppose, therefore, that I may regard this description of my dialectics as a mere harmless pleasantry, introduced to season a grave discussion. I may remark in passing that great gain would accrue if a little of the exact method of the schools could be introduced into the arguments upon momentous subjects which from time to time find place in our leading Reviews. "The rigorous definition, careful analysis, precise classification," the absence of which I deplored in my last contribution to these pages, would soon make an end of much loose thinking and looser writing. Of course no one would number Professor Huxley among loose thinkers or loose writers. Still, in matter of fact, his article might supply more than one instance to justify this view of mine. Thus the remark—perhaps he would call it a thesis—in my paper* that Materialism, in all its schools, is led to deny free will, is treated by the Professor† as though it were equivalent to the assertion that every school which denies free will is Materialistic. He has "converted" my proposition wrongly by universalising the predicate. Again, he uses the word "spontaneity" in a sense quite peculiar to himself. "The term, if it has any meaning at all," he asserts, "means uncaused action."‡ This is really an astounding statement. I will only remark upon it, *pace tanti viri*, that "spontaneity" unquestionably has a meaning in philosophy; and that, as unquestionably, "uncaused action" is not what it means. I know that the precise terminology of the schools is impossible in writings which are addressed to "the general-reader." We must adopt popular modes of speech when we appeal to the unscientific tribunal of public opinion. The problem for those of us who think we have something to teach the world, is to translate our philosophy into the world's language. It

* P. 585. † P. 799-800. ‡ P. 798.

is a problem which can never be completely solved. Identity between the vulgar and the scientific vesture of ideas is impossible. But assuredly the translator *ad populum* is not warranted in imposing a brand-new sense of his own upon technical terms of well-understood significance.

Such, at all events, is the rule which I myself have followed, as in my other writings, so in my article, *Materialism and Morality*. The argument of the paper was briefly this: that "the invalidation of the moral code, the prevalence of ethical Agnosticism, scepticism as to all first principles," are unmistakable signs of the times, which, as practical men, we may well consider portentous; and that the denial of free will and moral responsibility now rife in the world is largely owing to the spread of Materialism.* I pointed out how the more popular literature of the day, which is the truest expression of society, is redolent of Materialism in its most putrid forms And here Professor Huxley warmly sympathises with me, as we might have felt sure he would. I also said that, "if we survey the higher thought of Europe as a whole, we must find it, too, largely given over to Materialism." And among the exponents of that higher thought of whose teaching this is "*the practical outcome*," I was led to mention Professor Huxley as one of the most eminent and most influential. His doctrines, I ventured to say, seem to me "*in their ultimate resolution*" to be "substantially at one" with the Positivism which finds so positive an exponent in Mr. Frederic Harrison. And remembering Mr. Herbert Spencer's wise admonition that "only by varied iteration can alien conceptions be forced upon reluctant minds," I proceeded to amplify my meaning by saying, "Professor Huxley puts aside as unverifiable everything which the senses cannot verify, everything beyond

* It may, in some cases, be the Determinism of an Idealist school but, for the most part, I am convinced, it is something much baser.

the bounds of physical science, everything which cannot be brought into a laboratory and dealt with chemically." These last words of mine have supplied Professor Huxley with "three theses," to the demolition of which he has devoted four pages of what I may, perhaps, call without offence "very gracious fooling." He then proceeds to repudiate the doctrine of Materialism, as he understands it, just as heartily as he repudiates the doctrine of Spiritualism as I have presented it,* and to explain in some detail why he does this. Lastly, he begs me, "while denouncing physical science as the evil genius of modern days—mother of Materialism, Fatalism, and all sorts of other condemnable isms—to lay the blame on the right shoulders, or at least to put in the dock, along with Science, those sinful sisters of hers, Philosophy and Theology, who being so much older, should have known much better than the poor Cinderella of the schools and universities over which they have so long dominated;" poor Cinderella, who "lights the fire, sweeps the house, and provides the dinner;" and "in her garret has fairy visions out of the ken of the pair of shrews who are quarrelling downstairs."† And, to conclude, he proclaims that "the safety of morality lies neither in the adoption of this or that philosophical speculation, or this or that theological creed, but in a real and living belief in that fixed order of nature which sends social disorganisation upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses." ‡

Now the main point at issue between Professor Huxley and myself is whether I am right in reckoning him among teachers of Materialism. He protests that if he "may trust his own knowledge of his own thoughts," this is "an error of the first magnitude." § But surely the question is not about Professor Huxley's own knowledge of his own

* P. 793. † P. 801-2. ‡ P. 802. § P. 788.

thoughts. It is as to the obvious meaning and practical consequences of the words to which he has committed himself in print, and which he is not in the least disposed to retract. If, as I believed when I wrote my paper *Materialism and Morality*, and as I still believe after the most careful study of Professor Huxley's criticism upon it, there are among those words many statements which commit him to the doctrine, that is enough for my vindication, enough for the explanation which Professor Huxley seeks from me. Should it appear that the Professor, in other and perhaps contiguous statements, has committed himself to Idealism, the question might then arise whether he held both doctrines simultaneously or in succession. But I submit it would be no argument against his having, by force of terms, surrendered to Materialism, that he had never, in his own mind, intended to do so, or that he had before or afterwards preached Idealism. Rather it would illustrate what has been well pointed out by a recent very clear-headed writer, who, like myself, greatly admires Professor Huxley's high gifts: "It is just because science has private opinions of its own, just because of its convictions of the relativity of knowledge, just because of the irresistible arguments of Idealism, that it gets into a muddle. It has officially to profess Realism, and covertly to recognise Idealism. It then sets about solving the problem of their reconciliation, by stating it in terms which are applicable to the first only." * Professor Huxley, in his *Lay Sermon* on the Physical Basis of Life, proposed to lead his hearers "through the territory of vital phenomena to the materialistic slough," and then "to point out the path of extrication." † My contention is that a large number of his students—I believe the vast majority—and

* Coke, *Creeds of the Day*, vol. ii. p. 200.

† *Lay Sermons*, p. 139.

their name is legion, are led by him into the materialistic slough never to emerge from it. Some delicacy of discrimination, not commonly found in the average reader of to-day, is required in order to realise that Professor Huxley's materialistic language is really meant to be not more than metaphorical; that it implies only working hypotheses, which need not in the least be truths of fact.

I am anxious to make good my ground as I go, and therefore I shall, before proceeding further, here set down two observations. First let me say, in correction of a misapprehension of Professor Huxley's, which is to me quite unaccountable, that with physical science, working in its own province and by its own methods, I have no quarrel. I have not denounced it, I have never dreamed of denouncing it, as "the evil genius of modern days, mother of Materialism and Fatalism, and all sorts of other condemnable isms." There is not a syllable to that effect in my paper. And I cannot conceive how Professor Huxley, who, I am very sure, has no wish to misrepresent me, was led to attribute to me an absurdity, which—to put the case in a way likely, I think, to appeal strongly to him—would disgrace even "the heated pulpiteer." But, as I have been at the pains to point out, in my inculpated article, physical science is one thing; the extra-judicial utterances of its professors, however illustrious, are quite another. And it is matter of everyday observation that, upon the score of authority in this province of human thought, eminent persons are often credited with a like authority in other provinces, where physical science, as such, has nothing whatever to say. One of these provinces, I take leave to hold, is ethics. And when Professor Huxley asserts that "the safety of morality is in the keeping of science," I must say that he is putting forth such an extra-judicial utterance, upon which I shall have more to remark by-and-by. For the truth is that physical science, as such, can know

nothing, good or bad, about morality—"il n'y a rien de sale ni d'impudique pour la science," writes Diderot in the *Rêve d'Alembert*, correctly enough—and therefore is not competent to track or to state the connection between morality and social disorganisation. Morality and immorality are of the will and the intellect. But with the will and the intellect, as Professor Huxley himself witnesses when he preaches Idealism, physical science has no concern. Ah, yes. Cinderella must confine herself to "lighting the fire, sweeping the house, and providing the dinner," and not exercise herself in great matters, which are too high for her. I shall have to return to this point.

My second preliminary observation is in correction of another huge error concerning me into which Professor Huxley has fallen. "Mr. Lilly says," he writes, "that when Christian dogmas vanish, virtue will disappear too, and the ancestral ape and tiger will have full play." * Mr. Lilly has said nothing of the sort, but, on the contrary, has expressly disclaimed that view. "Litera scripta manet." And here are my words, which seem to me quiet plain and unambiguous: "Not, indeed, that I am now pleading for Christianity. Still less am I pleading for any special form of it. There is little in Christian morality that is exclusively Christian. And I am not prepared to assert that many of the most precious of the ethical elements of our civilisation might not survive a general decay of specifically Christian dogmas. My present contention is more general. It is this: that morality can have root only in the spiritual nature of man. If, from that happy soil, watered by the river of life, and refreshed by the dews of heaven, you transplant it to the rocks and sands of Materialism, wither and die it must." † Surely these words leave not a shadow of justification for

* P. 801. † P. 591.

Professor Huxley's assertion. Of course I feel persuaded—to borrow a phrase of his—that "there must be an explanation which will leave his reputation for common sense and fair dealing untouched." * What it may be I do not presume to suggest. But he must let me say, in his own emphatic words, that "I have never given the slightest ground for the attribution to me of the ridiculous contention" † that virtue is inseparably connected with Christian dogmas.

And now as to Professor Huxley's "Materialism." In the first place I observe that I cannot quite accept his definition of the term. It suits his argument, unquestionably; but it is too narrow. He says Materialism amounts to this: "That there is nothing in this universe but matter and force; and *that all the phenomena of nature are explicable by deduction from the properties assignable to these two factors.*" ‡ I reject the second half of this definition—the words which I have put in italics — as unnecessary and as incorrect. A Materialist may say, "I cannot explain the process by which certain products of matter and force come about, but I maintain that they are products of these two factors only, and not of a third different from them." Many —perhaps most—Materialists would grant that they cannot understand how molecular action produces thought; but all the same, they contend that there is no cause of thought except matter. Professor Huxley knows that just as well as I do, and probably much better. Of course the virtue of the saving clause in his definition is plain enough. He agrees with the Materialists as to the *fact* of origin. "Material changes are the causes of psychical phenomena." § But if you say, "Dear me; that sounds uncommonly like Material-

* P. 792.
† *Ibid.*
‡ P. 793.
§ P. 797.

ism," he turns round indignantly and exclaims, "*Nego*—I say No: the proprieties do not permit me to make the negation quite so emphatic as I could desire; I never said I could explain how they are the causes: I cannot conceive how the phenomena of consciousness are to be brought within the bounds of physical science," * and so forth. He grants that states of consciousness are brought into existence by molecular changes. Yet, for all that, you must not say that he teaches Materialism, because he cannot explain the process. Why, who *can* explain the process by which light becomes heat, or heat becomes electricity? And who is thereby hindered from asserting that heat, light, and electricity are in their nature physical, not psychical? It is a question of the nature of things, not of explaining the process by which one produces another. If, in fact, molecular changes do produce states of consciousness, be the process what it may—so long as it does not bring in a new non-physical cause—we are necessarily landed in Materialism. Now with all possible deference for Professor Huxley's knowledge of his states of consciousness, I must stick to my text that this very Materialism is contained in, and follows by strictest deduction from, his printed statements. Will he repeat that he never meant it? He must permit me in reply to repeat that I am concerned not with what he meant, but with what his words mean, with the message, not with the messenger. Let us turn to his words.

Professor Huxley declares, "If there is anything in the world which I do firmly believe, it is the universal validity of the law of causation." † Now here I find reason for regret that we are not proceeding after the manner of medieval disputants. If we were, I should at once ask him to define "the law of causation;" scholastic formalism always recom-

* P. 789-90. † P. 790.

mends such definitions to be given when possible. In the absence of any definition of the law of causation from Professor Huxley, it will not, I feel confident, be deemed by him excessive if I describe that which calls something into existence as the cause of that which it calls into existence. Well, then, in Professor Huxley's article I find these words: "the phenomena of consciousness as such, and apart from *the physical process by which they are called into existence.*"* Here we have "physical process" as the cause, and "the phenomena of consciousness" as the effect. But physical process is merely another name for "the molecular changes propagated from the eye," or any other organ "to a certain part of the substance of the brain," and these changes are due to "vibrations of luminiferous ether," † or whatever the medium may be. The "process of physical analysis" takes us backward to matter and force on the one hand, forward to "the phenomena of consciousness," "called into existence" by physical process, on the other. And, as we have seen, Professor Huxley, if he believes anything, believes in the unbroken sequence by which the "process" stands to "the phenomena of consciousness" in the relation of cause and effect. It is unwarranted, then, in his readers to conclude that in the last analysis "the phenomena of consciousness" must "be explicable by deduction from the properties assignable to matter and force?" And what is this but Materialism as defined by Professor Huxley himself?

Again, Professor Huxley holds "that it would be quite correct to say that material changes are the causes of psychical phenomena." ‡ "Psychical phenomena!" Surely it is what Polonius would call "an ill phrase." Can it be other than misleading to apply such a term as "phenomena" to the things of the mind, to its activities, or the exercise of

* P. 790. The italics are mine. † P. 790 ‡ P. 797.

them? For they do not appear in any proper sense of the word; they exist without appearing, and so should, in strict logic, come under Professor Huxley's canon: "De non apparentibus ut de non existentibus, eadem est ratio." * I do not press this point, although it is important. I merely throw it out, in passing, for Professor Huxley's consideration. The matter just now in hand is the Professor's proposition that "material changes are the causes of psychical phenomena." Is it, as he asserts, "quite correct" to say this? I am afraid I must answer after the manner of a medieval disputant and say *Distinguo*. What does Professor Huxley here mean by "cause"? Does he mean that material changes bring "psychical phenomena" into existence without the intervention of any other cause which is not a material change? If he does, assuredly there is an entirely adequate justification for dubbing him a Materialist; the very head and front of Materialism is to maintain that what is merely matter and force can produce that which is neither matter nor force. Or does he allow that a psychical immaterial cause must intervene? In that case his material change is not a cause, but, at the most, an occasion, which two, I would observe, in my character of medieval disputant, are not precisely the same thing. And what an amazing illustration Professer Huxley has chosen to elucidate his meaning! "The man who pulls the trigger of a loaded pistol placed closed to another's head certainly is the cause of that other's death, though in strictness he 'causes' nothing but the movement of the finger upon the trigger. And in like manner the molecular change which is brought about in a certain portion of

* See his most suggestive article on *The Hypothesis that Animals are Automata*, published in this Review in November, 1874. "In the matter of consciousness, if in anything," he there remarks, "we may hold by the rule, 'De non apparentibus ut de non existentibus eadem est ratio." P. 565.

the cerebral substance by the stimulation of a remote part of the body would be properly said to be the cause of the consequent feeling, whatever unknown term were interposed between the physical agent and the actual psychical product." * That is to say, a series of physical changes, beginning with the movement of the finger on the trigger, shows us exactly how molecular changes may produce, not physical effects co-ordinate with their activity, but "psychical phenomena," which are absolutely incommensurable with it! I hope Professor Huxley will not accuse me of "a damnable iteration" if I again ask, Has a psychical cause interposed? Then, the illustration is nothing to the purpose; it does not illustrate; and to employ the word "cause" for the mere material antecedents is to throw dust in our eyes. Has none interposed? Then how can Professor Huxley complain of those who dub him a Materialist? If pulling a trigger produces death, exactly as a physical change in the brain produces thought, and *vice versâ*, it passes my wit to see how Professor Huxley, in maintaining this, is to be differentiated from Dr. Büchner, who holds just the same thing.

Once more, Professor Huxley maintains that "consciousness, in certain forms at any rate, is a cerebral function." † The statement is more guarded than one which was put forward by him some years ago in quelling Mr. Darwin's critics. He then contended that as electric force and light waves are expressions of molecular changes, "so consciousness is, in the same sense, an expression of the molecular changes which take place in that nervous matter which is the organ of consciousness." ‡ So in writing in this Review in November, 1874, he laid it down that "the consciousness of brutes would appear to be related to the mechanism of their

* P. 797. † P. 796.

‡ *Contemporary Review*, vol. xviii. p. 465.

bodies, simply as a collateral product of its working." And it is quite clear from the whole of the paper in which these words occur that he does not allow of any difference in this matter between men and the brutes, as to which I quite agree with him. I do not know the precise object or value of the limiting words he now uses: "in certain forms, at any rate." I take it that we may fairly credit him with the proposition, which, indeed, he appears to grant, that "consciousness is a function of the brain." * And what does he mean by function? He replies, "We call function that effect, or series of effects, which result from the activity of an organ." † Very well. We will take that definition. And now let us go a step farther.

To Professor Huxley the whole of man, except his body, consists of "states of consciousness." ‡ So much is clear. To talk of a personality which underlies those states, or exists in them, appears to him a return to an "effete mythology." § Consciousness is the man, so far forth as he is man and not mere dead matter. Therefore it is no exaggeration to say that on this theory the brain makes the man—that man is the result of brain, or a cerebral function. And what is the brain except a little grey matter in a certain degree of complexity? Shall we be told that consciousness is simply the product of the activity of a material organ, and at the same time be forbidden, under pain of the strongest anathema which "the proprieties permit," to call this doctrine Materialism? What is Materialism if this is not? Nay, nay, says Professor Huxley, not so fast; in that sense, we are all Materialists. "We are all agreed that consciousness is a function of matter, and that particular tenet must be given up as a mark of Materialism." ‖ And he imagines me to

* P. 796.
† P. 797.
‡ *Lay Sermons*, p. 327.
§ P. 796.
‖ P. 797.

meet his parallel, drawn from the production of muscular motion, by conceding that "no physiologist, however spiritual his leanings, dreams of supposing that simple sensations require a 'spirit' for their production." * Professor Huxley must pardon me. That would not at all be my way of rejoining. What physiologists hold I am not just now concerned to ascertain. But psychologists also deal with simple sensations, and I am quite sure that I am not the sole survivor of the school which perceives a difference between dead and living muscle, which attributes the state of consciousness called pain to living and not to dead muscle, and which, therefore, affirms in living muscle the existence of an immaterial vital principle—in short, of "spirit," the absence of which it is that makes dead muscle, and renders pain impossible in such. Sensation, however simple, appears to me to be not a physical fact, not a nerve fact, but a mental fact. *Pace* Professor Huxley, we have not yet quite "done with that wholly superfluous fiction." Still less have psychologists conceded that a fiction it is. I certainly cannot allow that animal life, constituting certain states of consciousness, is due to a material organism in which nothing immaterial resides. Is this "immaterial" to be called "spirit"? Why not?

As little, or rather much less, can I allow that he does not teach Materialism who makes thought simply a function of the material brain, instead of asserting that the brain is at most † the instrument of thought, and supposes in a man a thinking principle, which it cannot and does not constitute. Materialism this certainly seems to me to be, and of the crassest kind. I can no more believe it, than I can believe that the woodman is a function of his axe, and that the axe is

* P. 797.

† See the note at p. 61 of this work.

not the woodman's instrument. If thinking man is the result of the activity of a little grey matter, then assuredly Dr. Büchner,* whether or no he represents physical science, will represent the only valid metaphysics, for the brain, physically considered, is matter and nothing but matter. Allow it to be the material antecedent, and the only cause which "calls into existence" "states of consciousness," and how can the conclusion be avoided that thought is the product of matter and force? If material changes are the causes, true and sufficient, of "psychical phenomena," are not these "phenomena" products of matter? Where will Professor Huxley introduce Idealism in the process? Nowhere in the process, but only in the result. Is that not precisely what the Materialist does? He starts from matter and gets to mind, and there is no break in the chain. Consciousness is to be, at any rate, "a collateral product" of nerve changes. If so, does it not originate in nerve matter?

I come now to the famous passage quoted in my article, *Materialism and Morality.* "The progress of science means the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant gradual banishment from all regions of human thought of what we call spirit and spontaneity." † Professor Huxley does not see what this has to do with Materialism. Really? Nor, I suppose, has it anything to do with Materialism that he once more asserts that "all the so-called spontaneous operations of the mind" are "connected in natural series of causes and effects" with "physical phenomena," ‡ the latter being causes and the "so called

* Let me, in passing, correct another strange mistake of Professor Huxley's. He writes (p. 794), "Dr. Büchner, whom Mr. Lilly appears to consider an authority in physical science." I cannot conceive how this "appears," for I have never said it, nor in any way implied it.

† *Lay Sermons*, p. 142.

‡ P. 798.

spontaneous operations" effects of them? Well, if what we call matter and energy really is what we call it, and is not another name for mind, then the extension of its province to all regions of thought should signify that in course of time all "phenomena," mental as well as material, will be included under matter and energy. But I may be reminded that Professor Huxley, in discoursing to the "Christian Young Men" of Cambridge, told them "It is an indisputable truth that what we call the material world is only known to us under the forms of the ideal world, and, as Descartes tells us, our knowledge of the soul is more intimate and certain than our knowledge of the body."* Yes; certainly Professor Huxley is the author of both of these statements, one of which banishes soul and spirit and makes matter supreme, the other of which reduces matter to a mental state, and gives mind the supremacy. If we are to follow him in his lecture on Descartes, the progress of knowledge should mean the extension of the province of what we call "soul," and which is likewise called spirit, mind, personality, to all regions of human thought, and the ideal transformation of what we call matter and force. But, as we have just seen, Professor Huxley maintains the opposite of this also, and makes the progress of science identical with the triumph of matter. Are we to describe him as an Idealist on the strength of one passage, or as a Materialist upon the strength of the other? or must we say that when he is not a Materialist he is an Idealist, and *vice versâ?* There is manifestly something here which requires clearing up. Even at the risk of being accounted no better than a medieval disputant, I venture to say that one of the two passages must go; no compromise between them is possible.

That, however, is a matter for Professor Huxley. I pro-

* *Lay Sermons*, p. 340.

ceed to note his dictum that "the growth of science, not merely of physical science, but all science, means the demonstration of order and natural causation among phenomena which had not previously been brought under those conceptions."* Now, if Professor Huxley were a medieval disputant and had "posted up" this thesis, I should vehemently desiderate from him a little definition. What does "order" mean? What is "natural causation"? If, as I suspect, "natural" is here equivalent to physical, Professor Huxley implies that the growth of science—of "all science"—consists in the reduction of mental problems to those of matter and force—in short, to mechanics and the expression of "consciousness" in foot-pounds. But if "natural causation" may be hyperphysical (I beg of Professor Huxley to note the word) as well as physical, does this establishment of it imply necessarily the extension of the province of matter and force? These are important questions, and as a perplexed reader of Professor Huxley's writings I should be grateful for a little light upon them, if the Professor is in a condition to radiate it. As for the word "order," is there any reason why a mental or a spiritual order should not exist over and above a physical order? And again we may ask, in no spirit of impertinent curiosity, how will it extend the sway of matter and force, to enlarge our conception of mental or spiritual order, distinct from physical?

Moreover it must not be forgotten that Professor Huxley, who distinguishes for the moment between "physical science" and "all science," has written elsewhere, "If there is one thing clear about the progress of modern science, it is the tendency to reduce all scientific problems, except those which are purely mathematical, to questions of molecular physics—that is to say, to the attractions, repulsions, motions, and co-

* P. 798.

ordination of the ultimate particles of matter."* Let him bear with me if I ask him whether mental problems—problems of consciousness—are scientific or not? If they are, then the clear tendency of modern science—approved, as is manifest, by Professor Huxley — is to reduce them to problems of molecular physics, which, truly, if it could be done, would make the empire of matter and force universal. Nor is there any other way of banishing "spirit and spontaneity" from human thought. But to take the other alternative, will Professor Huxley say that problems of consciousness are not scientific? In various parts of his paper in the December *Fortnightly* he insists, with indignant emphasis, that he does not pretend to bring "the phenomena of consciousness within the bounds of physical science." Therefore, it would seem they are not scientific at all; for as he has told us, in words just now quoted, it is the tendency of modern science to bring "*all* scientific problems" within those bounds. Grant them not to be "scientific," and how will the province of matter and force be made to include them? In no way; and then there will be a limit to the extension of that province: it will never become conterminous with all regions of human thought. It would be like the lifting of a fog if Professor Huxley would tell us which of the foregoing alternatives he proposes to defend. Is psychology a science? Is it reducible to molecular physics? Is not such a reduction tantamount to Materialism? Is every problem, transcendental and other, to be solved by the methods of physical science? Or are there regions of human thought where physics cannot find an entrance? For if there be, in such we may find room for spirit—nay, perhaps, even for "spontaneity." At any rate, universal "causation," reducible to the pullings and pushings of the final particles of matter, will have to be given up, or

* *Lay Sermons*, p. 166.

Materialism, of which this doctrine is the expression, must be accepted.

Professor Huxley, however, identifies the growth of science with the extension of "natural causation," and he fully acquiesces in the tendency to reduce "all scientific problems" to those of molecular physics. Is it misrepresenting him, then—the writer, I mean, not the inner consciousness of the individual man—to assert that he "puts aside as unverifiable everything which cannot," by some process or other, "be verified by the senses?" Again, it is his opinion that "as surely as every future grows out of past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law, until it is coextensive with knowledge, with feeling, with action." * It appears, then, that to extend the realm of matter and of law is one and the same thing. Matter, law, order, universal causation—to say one is to imply the rest. But it is the senses which deal with matter. If there is nothing beyond matter, there is nothing "which the senses cannot verify," nothing "beyond the bounds of physical science," nothing "which cannot be brought into a laboratory and dealt with chemically." If the problems of consciousness lie under the jurisdiction of physical science, *ipso facto* they are subject to the laws and tests of molecular physics. How is it misrepresenting Professor Huxley to debit him with the conclusions of his own premises?

But the professor is indignant to an extent which the proprieties do not allow him adequately to express. Does Mr. Lilly mean to tell me, he asks,† that my intellectual convictions, my æsthetic or logical faculty, my delight in the fine arts, lie within the bounds of physical science, or are verifiable by the senses, or can be tested chemically? Do *I* mean to tell him so? God forbid! It is *he* who, to be con-

* *Lay Sermons*, p. 142. † P. 789, *seq.*

sistent with the enunciations which I have quoted from him, should tell me so. I am very well aware that the senses, on which the science of molecular physics is founded, know nothing of "style and syllogisms," and I believe they know as little of the "keen perception of the beauty offered us by nature and by art." Neither is it by the senses that we verify the truths of mathematics, of philosophy, of history. But if these are truths belonging to the "regions of human thought," then the gradual extension of "order" and "natural causation" should, according to Professor Huxley's dictum, bring them one day into the province of physics. Is not "the realm of matter and law" to "become coextensive with knowledge, with feeling, with action"? Then it will, when spirit has been put to the ban, include such things as the binomial theorem, and the truth in any given history of Rome. For are not these products of that "consciousness" at a "mechanical equivalent" of which, Professor Huxley tells us, we shall sooner or later arrive, "just as we have arrived at a mechanical equivalent of heat?" The Professor deems these conclusions extremely absurd—"preposterous" is his word. So do I. But what, if they flow from his premises about the reduction of scientific problems to those of molecular physics, and the identification of law with matter, and of both with knowledge, feeling, and action?

Professor Huxley inquires whether any human being puts aside as unverifiable everything which the senses cannot verify. He makes good play with the question, repeating it, in divers forms, with brilliant effect, which shows that his right hand has by no means forgotten its cunning. His is one of those opulent and puissant natures that age cannot wither, nor custom stale their infinite variety. Will he suffer me, for clearness' sake, in answering his question, to speak once more after the manner of a medieval disputant, and to say, *Distinguo*. That no human being puts aside *in fact* everything

that the senses cannot verify, I allow, or rather, maintain. But all human beings do so *in theory* who are of the school of Sensationalism or Materialism. I was not discussing in my paper what Professor Huxley does, for he does what we all do: his daily life is ordered and governed by a great number of certitudes which the senses cannot verify. No. I was rehearsing what he had said, and was pointing out that it involved, and so far as I could understand expressed, a theory which forbids us to accept as true or certain whatever lies outside the bounds of physical science—whatever, therefore, cannot be brought into a laboratory and dealt with chemically. I did not say that Professor Huxley's mind is Materialistic—it is too richly endowed, as I expressly recognised,* to be dominated by "Pig-philosophy"—but that his theory is. And I say so again, with the full knowledge that he has often employed language diametrically opposed to Materialism, and that he may, in a true sense, be regarded rather as the candid friend than the irreconcilable enemy of the Higher Theism. I say that the passages from his writings which I have brought forward, either have no definite meaning, or else contain the doctrine that matter gives rise to mind by a process of natural causation, in which the series of causes and effects is unbroken; in other words, where there are physical causes at the beginning of the chain and mental effects at the end of it. And I call that doctrine Materialism.

So much as to the main point at issue between Professor Huxley and myself. But there are yet some things to be said before my explanation will attain that completeness which I desire it to possess. The Professor tells us that he heartily repudiates "the doctrine of *Kraft und Stoff*—force and matter—as the Alpha and Omega of existence, the funda-

* P. 577.

mental article of the faith Materialistic;"* and that for witnessing against it he has suffered reproach as being "retrograde" and even—*horresco referens*—"an obscurantist." † Moreover he reiterates what he has said, "not once but constantly," on the impassable gulf which divides neurosis from psychosis. How are we to reconcile these strong convictions and arguments with what I have quoted from him, and with a large number of other passages to the same effect which I have collected from his writings, but which the time would fail me to transcribe? If Professor Huxley agrees with Professor Tyndall that there is "an impassable gulf," how can he attribute the causation of psychosis to neurosis, which we have seen him do repeatedly when stating that "molecular changes are the cause of psychical phenomena"? A gulf which may be traversed by causation ceases to be an "impassable gulf;" we must employ another metaphor and speak of the links in an unbroken series of causes and effects. When neurosis calls psychosis into existence the gulf is thereby bridged. But we shall be told, the process remains inscrutable. The answer to that may be given in four words: Every process is inscrutable. We do not know the *how* of a single causal nexus. The question therefore remains, on what ground can a writer, of good faith as indubitable as his intellectual power, who makes mind the product or result or effect of molecular changes, decline to be ranked as a Materialist?

The probable solution of this grave difficulty lies, as I have already indicated, in Professor Huxley's announcement, that he believes in the relativity of our knowledge. He prefers to speak "of what we call matter and energy," "what we call psychical phenomena." He is perhaps of opinion that the doctrine of relativity makes Materialism impossible, and

* P. 794. † P. 796

Idealism too. So it does, in an *absolute* sense; but so it does not in a *relative*. It reduces all our knowledge to an acquaintance with phenomena, doubtless; it leaves intact, however, the problem, which set of phenomena gives rise to the other, which calls the other into existence, or which we should account causes, in a relative sense, and which effects. But in its influence on the social order, on morals and life, a relative would be no less disastrous than an absolute Materialism. For the mass of men are not metaphysicians, and to them the distinction between relative and absolute can have no meaning. A sensualist is willing to indulge himself "phenomenally" and "relatively," if he finds the effects agreeable, precisely as under former systems of thought he might have done so "absolutely" and "really." The change of name can make no difference. And thus *Physicus*, in his well-known book,* when he has considered "the bearing on Materialism of the simple doctrine of Relativity," concludes, "Here we saw that Materialism was only affected to the extent of being compelled to allow that what we know as matter and motion are not known in themselves." "But," he goes on to say, "we also saw that as the inscrutable realities are uniformly translated into consciousness as matter and motion, it still remains as true as ever that *what we know* as matter and motion may be the causes of what we know as mind." In like manner, with reference to the late Professor Clifford's dictum that a "moving molecule of inorganic matter does not possess mind or consciousness, but it possesses a small piece of mind stuff," *Physicus* remarks, that if it be true, "then assuredly the central position of Materialism is shown to be impregnable." Now *Physicus*, however we may account of him, is not tainted with the suspicion of scholasticism. Consider, again, Mr. Spencer's teaching

* P. 187.

upon the relativity of knowledge and the persistence of force. What is its outcome but the doctrine of self-existent matter? Take his own statement: "Clearly, therefore, the proposition that an 'originating mind' is the cause of Evolution is a proposition that can be entertained so long only as no attempt is made to unite in thought its two terms in the alleged relation." * But of course Mr. Spencer does not "post up" Materialism in the absolute sense of the old and artless Realists. My point is, however, that the multitudes of men are and must be artless Realists, and that they are taking the Materialism of Mr. Spencer, Professor Huxley, and Mr. Clifford *au pied de la lettre*, with the consequences which I have endeavoured to depict in my article *Materialism and Morality*.

It is not, therefore, on the score of language merely, nor by singling out isolated passages, not, assuredly, for the sake of controversy, for which I have neither aptitude nor taste, but because, on taking all the evidence into account, I deemed it so, that I spoke of Professor Huxley's writings as tending to elevate Materialism into the reigning creed of the day. It might be feasible to show that various authors, to whom no one would attribute Materialism, have used unguarded or equivocal expressions; but it is not by reason of such that, when all is said and done, I feel obliged to maintain my former position, adding of course that, neither then nor now, have I dreamt of penetrating into the depths of Professor Huxley's consciousness. He appears to think the combination of Phenomenist and Materialist impossible. It seems to me that between these two forms of negation there is a natural affinity. The Materialist denies mind altogether, or makes it a function of matter; the Phenomenist denies that faculty of intuition which is the essential characteristic of mind, and calling mind a phenomenon breaks down the

* See the whole passage in his *Essays*, vol. iii. pp. 246-249.

distinction that severs it from those material entities which really are phenomena. I do not think Professor Huxley escapes from the Materialism which has been called, most unwarrantably, "The Creed of Science," by adopting the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge. Shall I appear to him no better than a medieval disputant if I say that this seems to me to be merely adding a second error to the first?

"The Creed of Science." "The relation of science to morals." Employing the term physics, as less open to ambiguity, I am here brought back to what I said at the beginning, that physics, as such, is not conversant with morals, neither affirms nor denies religion, and can therefore have no creed in regard to either. We do not talk of the religion of the sense of hearing, nor of its irreligion; such an expression would be absurd. In like manner physics, which is wholly the science of the senses, abstracts from religion, from morality, and from every kind of knowledge so far as the latter is independent of sense. I say "abstracts from," I do not say "rejects," or "repudiates," or "denies." Physical science merely attends to its own business, and it is no part of its business to deal with what the late Mr. Lewes denominated the "metempirical." It is not Agnostic, for Agnosticism implies a knowledge of one's own ignorance; and physical science does not know that it is ignorant, any more than a mollusc knows that it is not moral. It is wonderful how much has been made out to the prejudice of religion as of morality, from the obvious canon of logic that, every science having its proper object, the proper object of physics does not include God or the moral order. Science, all science, has on the strength of this been described as hostile to metaphysical principles, to belief in a Personal Deity, and to an *à priori* standard of ethics. Hostile, physical science is not; indifferent, it is and ought to be.

Professor Huxley asks, In what laboratory questions of æsthetics and historical truth can be tested? In none, as we both agree. But it is curious that he should think of safeguarding morality by means of that science which cannot even attain to the laws of historical criticism. He will, perhaps, assure me that I mistake him again. Well, I do not mistake in asserting that he considers physical science "a better guardian of morality" than "the pair of shrews," philosophy and theology. I will say what strikes me on that point, and so conclude this paper, which has extended far beyond what I proposed to myself when I began to write it. But whether one agrees with Professor Huxley or disagrees, his pages are so fascinating that it is difficult to tear oneself away from them.

The morality of an act, we must all surely admit, is not a physical quality; it resides in the motive, and again in the nature of the act; whether, namely, the latter is conformable to a standard of perfection which the mind alone apprehends. The outward effects of two actions may be precisely similar, as when an assassin slays his victim and an executioner hangs a convicted criminal. But one of these acts will be foul murder; the other a righteous ministration of retributive justice. Will Professor Huxley point out any science which is not a part of philosophy or theology, and is yet competent to discriminate between these two acts? What can "science" affirm about them unless it becomes philosophy or theology? Nothing whatever. Physical science perceives only that which the senses grasp; and the senses know nothing of justice or injustice. Is it by physics that we know when social disorganisation is the consequence of immorality? I trow not. To physics the deeds of a Wellington and of a Genghiz Khan are "molecular changes," and no more. Physical science may predict that if certain physical actions take place, certain physical structures will be injured or broken up.

But it can never tell what is the moral quality of those physical actions. The taint of leprosy may be contracted by vicious habits, or in the exercise of sublimest self-sacrifice. But can "science" inform us whether Père Damien, in his fearful prison at Molokai, contracted it because he was good or because he was evil? Therefore, I must affirm, that while physical science may be, and ought to be, the servant of morality, it can never, in any proper sense, be its guardian. The only effective guardian of morality is religion, which affords it a sanction and a reward, which incarnates it in august symbolism and utters it in divine command for all those —they are, and ever must be, the overwhelming majority— who cannot lay hold of an abstruse philosophy, but need to be taught as children. Physical science may indeed mark the difference, which in time becomes outward and visible, between those who cultivate morality and those who trample it under foot. But there its competency stops; its powers of interpretation are exhausted. What lies at the root of the difference it can never tell. It has no means of discerning virtue or vice, and to intrust the age to its guidance would be like asking one's way of a blind giant. That he was a giant would be no compensation for his want of sight; and, if he thought himself all the more at liberty because he perceived no hindrance to his action, so much the worse would it be for those whom he dragged along with him. I have applied the parable in the paper which Professor Huxley has criticised. Physical science, apart from philosophy and religion, is indeed a giant, but it is blind. And when it proceeds unscientifically to formulate its ignorance into a creed, it is doing its best not to subserve morality, but to ruin it.

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